



신의 노래

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8 완결



주|라온 E&M

SONG OF GOD

-신의 노래-

- VOLUME 3 -

-AUTHOR-

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Chapter 91

The Director of the broadcasting station's number came up on the ringing phone's caller ID. Producer Kim Ki Sik picked up the call confidently.

"Hello, Director."

"Kim Ki Sik! You jerk. Why won't you pick up my calls!"

"I just picked up."

"What about Jun Hyuk? Where's that brat right now?"

"I don't know. I'm sure he'll be in the waiting room or something."

"Ha ha ha. You did well. I was so anxious the whole time I was watching."

"How about me? I thought I was going to die."

"You worked hard. You can't leave once you're done with work today. Let's get everyone together for dinner."

"You can't pay it off with alcohol. Bring me a bonus."

"Don't be a brat. What are you going to do now? Is Jun Hyuk out?"

"There's nothing we can do. We need to take him out of the running. If we save him now, it wouldn't make sense. We'll be advertising that this isn't an audition program."

"Good. Just make sure you get a good interview today. At least get him to say why he cried."

"Okay."

"Keep working hard. Ha ha."

The youngest member of the production team came running as the Director's laughter

rang over the phone with his certainty that they would have high viewer ratings.

“Producer Kim! Jun Hyuk... Jun Hyuk disappeared.”

“What?”

“He’s not in the waiting room or the bathroom.”

“I’m going to go crazy. Hurry up and find him!”

How long would these unexpected situations last? He had never been part of such a rollercoaster ride in all of the live shows he had done until now. Producer Kim Ki Sik only hoped that they could get past today safely.



Kim Jong Suk was lying down on the sofa in the recording studio watching TV, but got up as soon as Jun Hyuk’s song stopped. He could tell from the timbre as soon as Jun Hyuk started singing that he was not following his biological mother’s image, but her sight.



Yoon Kwang Hun was watching the broadcast on the large TV in the cafe and could not stay still when Jun Hyuk disappeared behind the stage. He wanted to run to the broadcasting station, but it would be over once he arrived. He could not figure out what to do and paced inside.

After hesitating for 10 minutes, he put on his jacket to leave the cafe when his phone rang loudly. An unknown phone number. He picked it up thinking that it would be an employee at the broadcasting station.

“Hello?”

Sir?

“Jun Hyuk. You... What about the broadcast? Where are you? Why is there so much noise? Whose phone number is this”

Oh, this is the taxi driver's phone. I'm on my way to the cafe right now.

"What? Taxi? Hey! What about the broadcast?"

Oh, I don't know. Really. The broadcast or whatever.

"Anyway, you're saying you're on your way to the cafe? You're sure?"

Yes. And sir, please come to the cafe if you're at home. I don't have any money on me. The taxi will come out to a lot.....

"Don't worry. I'm watching the broadcast at the cafe right now. Don't worry and hurry up and get here."

Okay.

Yoon Kwang Hun ended the call and checked the phone number again. He thought that he would need to hurry up and tell the station this. A participant disappeared. Would they be able to rectify the situation? It is a great broadcast accident.

Then the phone rang again.

"Hello?"

Ah, Mr. Yoon. I'm the youngest writer at MV. Do you remember me?

"Oh, yes. I was just about to call."

I have something to tell you...

"You're calling because of Jun Hyuk? Don't worry. I just spoke to him. He said he's on the way here in a taxi."

Excuse me? A taxi?

"I'm really sorry. I think he was so surprised after he made an accident on live broadcast.?"

Sir, wait a second. Please don't hang up the phone.

He could hear someone's cursing, grumbling, and sighing through the phone.

Sir, can't you convince Jun Hyuk to turn the taxi around now? All we have to do is wrap it up.....

Yoon Kwang Hun could only feel sorry at the youngest writer's cautious voice. If the kid was someone who would go back, he would not have run away in the first place.

"I'm really sorry. I'm pretty sure it'll be hard. It's also uncertain whether he'll even go back on stage if he does go back."

Yes, I see. I'll give you a call again.

Yoon Kwang Hun hung up the phone and turned the TV on again. He did not have to worry about Jun Hyuk because he was on his way home, but he wanted to see what would happen to the broadcast.

He was sure that the sweat on MC Yoon Kyung Min's forehead was not from the heat of the lights. He started announcing the eliminations as he stuttered.

As soon as he announced Jun Hyuk's name, they screened the scene where his song stopped. This came along with a request to excuse his absence as he is not in a state to appear on stage.

As soon as the broadcast ended, his phone rang and he heard the youngest writer's weak voice.

Sir, it's me, the youngest writer.

"I'm sorry. I'm sure you had a lot of issues with the broadcast."

No, it's okay since we somehow wrapped it up. Oh right, sir.

"Yes."

We need to meet Jun Hyuk tomorrow, so please convince him for us.

"Tomorrow? Can I ask why?"

Since we finished the last like this today... we thought we would at least need to get an interview to air next week.

“Oh, I see. I’m sure he’ll be compliant too since he did cause a problem.”

Thank you. The cafe opens at 11? Can we go looking for you before you open?

“Sure, is 9:00 okay?”

Yes. Then we will see you tomorrow.

30 minutes after he got off the phone, he could see the bright light of a car outside the cafe.

Yoon Kwang Hun paid the taxi fare and took a Jun Hyuk who could not look him in the eyes inside.

“What happened to you?”

Jun Hyuk had not been able to lift his head because he thought that he would be scolded, but looked up at Yoon Kwang Hun’s gentle voice.

“I just came. I was going to be eliminated anyway and there was no reason to stay.”

“Even so. You need to finish up the broadcast before you come.”

“Oh, I don’t know. You said it too. You told me to just quit and come back if I didn’t want to do it anymore. I guess that’s why I came.”

“Kid, did that mean you should quit and leave in the middle of a live broadcast? You should have finished up the live broadcast.”

“I can’t do it anymore. I’m embarrassed.”

“What? Embarrassed? What’s embarrassing?”

“You know. I almost cried in front of the entire nation. I made myself a joke.”

“What? Are you saying you came here because you were embarrassed? You’re driving me crazy. Geez. He he.”

“Stop it. I think I’m going to go crazy. What kind of embarrassment is this... whew.”

“Did you really almost cry?”

“Ah... I’m telling you it’s real. I would’ve cried if I sat there for another second.”

Yoon Kwang Hun also had the thought that it might have been better if he had just cried his heart out. Crying is a way to shake one’s feelings.

“Alright. Well whatever happened, you worked hard.”

Yoon Kwang Hun poured two glasses of sparkling wine in the kitchen and handed one over to Jun Hyuk.

“Drink it and calm down a little.”

“Isn’t this alcohol?”

“I’m giving it to you to congratulate you on finishing the broadcast. You worked hard.”

Yoon Kwang Hun pat Jun Hyuk’s back and clinked his glass.

“I’ve never drank before.”

“This kid. You think I don’t know? I know you take beers and wine from the fridge. I just pretended I didn’t know. I drank when people weren’t looking at your age too. You’re acting like it’s something new.”

Yoon Kwang Hun saw Jun Hyuk laugh and drank his refreshing wine. Whatever had happened, Jun Hyuk had experienced a lot in a short period of time and had taken a step into society.

Chapter 92

The writers who came from MV channel the next day were not able to get much out of the interview. No matter how relentlessly they asked for a comment on his performance, he just gave the simple response that he does not know and is sorry.

If there was anything that they got out of him, it was what was to come in the future.

“Then if an agency calls, do you intend to sign a contract and continue your activities in music?”

“Um... I don’t know about an agency. There is a promise I made with Teacher Jo Hyung Joong... We said we’d release a record.”

“A record? Then it’ll be your debut album?”

“It’s a bit much to say it’s a debut album. It’s just to commemorate I guess.”

“Commemorate? Are you saying you’re going to produce an album before going to study abroad?”

“I haven’t decided on studying abroad yet. We’re going to make our decision slowly.”

All they got from the interview was that he would be making an album. Jun Hyuk’s producer, Kim Jong Suk, gave a better analysis of last night’s events.

“Producer Kim. You had a hard time yesterday? He he.”

“I really... You took 10 years off my life.”

When Kim Jong Suk suddenly appeared at the station, Producer Kim Ki Sik made a fuss.

“What 10 years... I’m sure you hit the highest viewer ratings. Don’t you need to buy me a drink?”

He had gone back and forth between heaven and hell, but they had recorded the best ratings at 17%.

Kim Jong Suk made a request to the music director to see Jun Hyuk's videos from the day before, and carefully watched all of the videos of Jun Hyuk's rehearsal and performance from different angles.

The music director rewatched the rehearsal video and spoke,

“You’re really impressive. How did you get this out of Jun Hyuk?”

“Right? The rehearsal is his real image. What a waste.”

“Yeah. There’s an overlap with folk singers from the 60s and 70s. Though I’m sure kids these days won’t buy into it.....”

“It’s okay. That’s enough. I think a good song will come out after time passes and Jun Hyuk is a little older. Whether he sings or not.”

Producer Kim who was watching from the side was more curious about something other than the music.

“But what happened? Can you guess?”

“Well... roughly. I don’t know if it’s right or wrong though.”

The two men just looked at Kim Jong Suk’s mouth.

“He’s normal during the rehearsal. And it’s the image that I had wanted.”

“But then what happened on the stage?”

“I’m not sure about that either. But this is what I’m thinking. Don’t you think he saw his own image instead of his mother while he was singing on stage?”

“His own image?”

“Yeah. His abandoned self. He saw himself as an infant being abandoned through the eyes of his mother singing the song. Don’t you think it could be that his singing became rough and he saw himself pathetically because he saw himself thrown away?”

Kim Ki Sik had been expecting a grand secret and could not understand. The music director on the other hand, nodded lightly and showed sympathy. Only the singer can

know the emotions he felt while he was singing, but they could make various interpretations as the listeners.

“Then I guess this is Jun Hyuk’s first and last image.”

“What? What do you mean his last?”

“Oh, I mean as young Jun Hyuk singing. You think he’ll sing going forward after showing that side of himself? Though it might change when he gets older... Producer Kim. Keep this saved. It’ll become incredible footage. If Jun Hyuk becomes a world-famous musician, these videos will become really valuable.”

It was then that Producer Kim Ki Sik realized that this video is the most expensive treasure they obtained from this season. Top stations, even international stations, would need to pay MV channel to use this footage. The fee for the footage of Elvis Presley’s first appearance on CBS is \$30,000.

Though his would not be to the point of Elvis Presley, it would become a generous source of income if he even won an award in a competition.

After Jun Hyuk was eliminated from the audition program, his fans swarmed to the cafe starting early in the morning. They looked around the cafe waiting for him to appear. Yoon Kwang Hun took Jun Hyuk and came out of the cafe. If they stayed any longer, he would be imprisoned in the basement practice room.

Yoon Kwang Hun stopped by the bank before taking Jun Hyuk to his house.

“Sir, why are we going to the bank all of a sudden?”

“We need to make an account under your name.”

“What? My account?”

“Yeah. I’m going to move the deposit from your modeling contract to your account. We need to have one made for you.”

Since Jun Hyuk had never earned money himself before, \$20,000 is not an easily quantifiable sum to him. When he first saw the modeling contract, he had been counting the number of zeros on his fingers.

"And you'll start getting incentives from the songs you arranged and performed on the broadcast. They said they'll settle the amount every 3 months, so you really need an account."

The average child would be putting the money he received over the holidays into his first bank account. That time is very late for Jun Hyuk, but he had earned an amount that children at his age could not even touch.

Jun Hyuk opened his first account while receiving courteous treatment from the bank employees and was only able to escape after taking a commemorative photo.

While they were coming home after, Yoon Kwang Hun wondered,

"The modeling fee is \$20,000... What do you want to do? Is there anything you want to do?"

"Sir, I think you should just keep the money....."

"Why? Why should I keep it when I didn't earn it?"

"I told you. I'll make money and repay your kindness."

"This kid. You think \$20,000 will cut it?"

Jun Hyuk started to stutter in surprised at Yoon Kwang Hun's retort,

"Oh, no. I'm saying you should keep everything I earn."

Yoon Kwang Hun smirked at Jun Hyuk's surprised face.

"Later."

"Excuse me?"

"When you make \$2million or \$20million, I'm going to keep it all. This kid! Lawyer Baek said it too. I used to work with hundreds of millions. \$20,000? That's not even money to me. You use that as pocket change."

"But....."

Yoon Kwang Hun who had been joking until now spoke seriously,

"Jun Hyuk, it's the first time you've earned money. Don't save it and just use it. You've never been able to have anything you wanted for 17 years. Have it."

Jun Hyuk was walking with an apologetic face when he smiled a little. Yoon Kwang Hun did not miss it and asked,

"There is something. What is it?"

"Oh, the truth is... there is something I really want to get, but I don't think you'll let me."

"Tell me. I'm telling you to do whatever you want as long as it isn't anything bad."

"A motorcycle."

"What? A motorcycle? Ha ha."

Music, star, model... Because of these words, he had been forgetting for a while that Jun Hyuk is a teenager who likes to look cool.

"What kind? Is there a model that you have in mind?"

Jun Hyuk spoke excitedly because he thought that Yoon Kwang Hun would oppose it saying that it is dangerous.

"You know, Suzuki? The rear shock absorber went up so....."

It is an age where bikes that race through traffic look cool. That is, before they see luxury goods.

"Do you want to see what a real motorcycle is?"

"A real motorcycle?"

"Let's go. See the real thing."

Yoon Kwang Hun brought Jun Hyuk back to the cafe and got in the car to go to Seoul. Where they went was not a neighborhood motorcycle shop, but a blaring specialized dealership with impressive motorcycles.

"These are real motorcycles. What do you think?"

Jun Hyuk was already standing in front of a red motorcycle, speechless as if in a trance. It was so polished that he was scared to even touch it.

Jun Hyuk stood staring at it and slowly reached a hand out to stroke the red motorcycle.

"Ducati Monster 696. You picked a good one. Masterpiece of masterpieces. The shock absorber Suzuki 125cc is just a tractor. This is what you call a motorcycle."

With Jun Hyuk's modeling fee, he would only be able to afford the Monster model which is the lowest of the middle level Ducatis. The bigger problem was that they are really monsters that are too powerful for a beginner to handle.

"Wow, your father is awesome. Gifting a Ducati to his son."

An employee approached the two as he started his small talk.

"Wow – your son is really a model. He's tall and handsome. It looks like this one found its rightful owner."

The employee stroked the Ducati and looked back and forth between the bike and Jun Hyuk when he started stammering,

"Are... Are you Jang Jun Hyuk? Tomorrow's Star? Right?"

However, Jun Hyuk was so enwrapped by the motorcycle that he did not hear him.

"Yes, that's right. But we're not buying right now. We just came to look today. He doesn't have a license yet. We'll come back once he gets his license."

"Oy, look all you want."

The employee called the dealership manager who had left while the two were looking at the bike. There was no windfall like the appearance of such a rising star.

"Boss, hurry up and call headquarters to tell them that Jun Hyuk is here. Don't we need to give him a lot of discounts? We're getting free advertisement."

Chapter 93

While they were going back home, Yoon Kwang Hun told Jun Hyuk the conditions he needed to keep if he wanted to buy the motorcycle.

“You have to wear your safety equipment properly and you can’t ride alone.”

“What? You’re not saying you’ll ride on back, are you?”

“Are you crazy? Enroll in a club and learn how to ride safely. You need to go into a club of old people with a lot of experience. You’ll ride with them. You can’t ride alone until riding safely becomes a habit.”

Jun Hyuk just nodded to everything. He could not really hear what was being said. Whatever the conditions were, he needed to buy the bike first.

From that day on, Jun Hyuk did not care about music, working on his first album, or studying abroad. He was preoccupied with passing the exam to obtain his license in one go.



Yoon Kwang Hun did not know what to do with the customers who came pouring in as soon as he opened the cafe doors. They were all Jun Hyuk’s fans.

Yoon Kwang Hun’s cafe is the Holy Land to Jun Hyuk’s fans. They need to make the pilgrimage here, so there were even fans from the countryside who chartered tour buses to come. They already had 3 employees, but it had gotten to the point where they need to hire more.

After dealing with customers all day, he went home exhausted and just slept.

He was currently building a new cafe in a place a little removed from the cafe now. Lawyer Baek Seung Ho made a tremendous amount of money for him and he would be able to build multiple cafes with that.

Yoon Kwang Hun put a spacious studio in the basement and was setting up the third floor as a residence for Jun Hyuk and himself.

He was going to make the 1st and 2nd floors into a cafe and live with music. Yoon Kwang Hun thought that Jun Hyuk's fans would not come bothering him in hordes if they moved, so he was just counting down the days until they could go in.

Female customers came flooding in as soon as the cafe doors opened again, and they began to chatter after ordering coffee and honey bread. When about half of the seats were taken, a middle-aged woman in plain clothes opened the doors to come in. The middle-aged woman looked familiar like someone he had seen before.

When he had the thought 'Is she a regular?' an employee approached and spoke,

"Boss, that woman said she's here to meet you."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Oy, what a bother. What now?"

Yoon Kwang Hun stopped frowning, walked toward the woman, and greeted her politely,

"Hello. I am the owner of this cafe."

"Mr. Yoon Kwang Hun?"

"Yes."

"Can we speak for a moment?"

"I'm sorry, but it's a little busy at the moment as you can see."

"Hm... I heard that you love music, but I guess you don't consider domestic music worthy?"

"Excuse me? What are you talking about?"

"Do you know who I am? My name is Jeon Hye Jin."

“Jeon Hye Jin? Ah, pianist Jeon Hye Jin?”

Professor Jeon Hye Jin laughed at Yoon Kwang Hun’s surprise.

“Yes. What a relief. You know my name.”

“How rude of me... I didn’t think you would come to a shabby cafe like this. My apologies.”

“It’s okay. You’re someone who hasn’t purchased my CD. It’s a relief that you know my name.”

“Excuse me? Oh, CD... I should have one somewhere...”

Yoon Kwang Hun’s face turned red at Jeon Hye Jin’s teasing.

“Ho ho. Relax. I’m not here to pick on you about that. Actually, I met Jun Hyuk not too long ago.”

“Jun Hyuk?”

Yoon Kwang Hun sat on the seat opposite Professor Jeon Hye Jin.

“Yes. Hwang Suk Min brought him to our school. He said that Jun Hyuk is a gem but could not give a concrete evaluation.”

“Ah, I see.”

“Oh right, I heard that Jun Hyuk’s broadcast ended but where is he now?”

“He’s studying hard these days to get his license. Ha ha. He’s at my apartment because of the cafe’s state as you can see. What should we do about this? You probably came to meet Jun Hyuk.”

Even in Jeon Hye Jin’s eyes, this was not just any cafe. It was a spectacle with women of all ages noisily taking pictures in front of the piano and bookcase full of CDs.

“No, it’s better this way. I actually came here because I wanted to speak with you.”

“Me?”

Why would a pianist come looking for him? Is this about lessons? Or? Various thoughts passed through Yoon Kwang Hun's head.

Jeon Hye Jin took a look around the cafe and saw the CDs on the wall and the grand piano in the middle of the cafe.

"So he listened to all of those CDs filling that wall."

"Yes."

"It's a relief that he met someone like you."

Jeon Hye Jin sipped the coffee an employee brought over and spoke,

"Then Jun Hyuk just listened to music for 2 years."

"Yes. Fortunately, I was able to show him how to read music scores and he did the rest on his own."

Jeon Hye Jin looked at Yoon Kwang Hun and carefully brought up her reason for coming,

"I observed this gem that Jun Hyuk is. Hm... How should I say it? Should I say he's a gem that's impossible to judge?"

Thank you for evaluating him so highly."

"At first, I thought that it would be a joke for me to become involved and that I would be meddling... but I couldn't stay still. I looked into and heard that you're already thinking of sending Jun Hyuk to study abroad."

"No that's not it."

"You're not?"

Jeon Hye Jin had her coffee cup in her hand as her eyes widened. She thought that this man might be having different thoughts. She was even suspicious that he might be thinking of ways to make money by having Jun Hyuk work in Korea.

"I just made one out of many paths that Jun Hyuk can take. He can take that path if he wants to and he can leave it if he doesn't."

“What did the schools you looked into say?”

“All except one said that they would give him a full scholarship.”

“Which is the stupid school that rejected him?”

“Ha ha. They’re not stupid. It’s Eastman School of Music. They said that they would give him a full scholarship, a place for him to live alone, and even \$2,000 every month in allowance.”

“Are you hesitating because of money?”

“No. We have plenty of money. And Jun Hyuk is already making enough money. Money isn’t the issue.”

There are prestigious schools all over the world waiting for Jun Hyuk with open arms. But to say that he has no intention to force him to go? Jeon Hye Jin wondered what Yoon Kwang Hun was thinking and listened carefully to his next words.

“I wanted Jun Hyuk to focus on classical as well. But... I don’t know if you know, but after we went through a bad situation, my thoughts changed. It’d be great if Jun Hyuk gained fame and became a world-renowned figure, but I just want him to be happy doing what he wants to do. Isn’t he just 17 years old? Even without rushing him, he will show us mature music as he grows up.”

Yoon Kwang Hun thought of Jun Hyuk’s happy face these days.

“Right now, Jun Hyuk is studying at home because he wants to get his license. That image of him looks happier than he did when he was making music.”

“Sir, may I say something that is overstepping my boundaries?”

“Yes, please.”

“We say that Mozart is a genius because he composed a symphony at age 5. It certainly isn’t because he was able to copy a song after hearing it once. The important thing is that in his time from a 5 year old prodigy until he died at 26, his music never stopped developing.”

Jeon Hye Jin was saying that Jun Hyuk’s development would cease if they became

satisfied with his talent now.

“Right now, Jun Hyuk is definitely a genius. But I’m more curious about the music Jun Hyuk will make as a 26 year old than I am about the music he’ll make at 17. If he gains popularity and does Korean pop music... it’s a bit worrisome. He could just stop here.”

Chapter 94

Even Beethoven who was going deaf, was not satisfied with his music and put all of himself into writing music until the end. The result of that is none other than Symphony No. 9 Choral, the ultimate masterpiece in the history of symphonies.

Everyone who was labeled a genius was able to maintain that title because they put in an endless effort until the day they died.

“When I was young, there was a boy my age whose IQ was over 200. He even came out on TV. Was it at age 4? The whole country was talking about it because he completed college level math problems perfectly. However, he’s now a level 7 official in the countryside. If you don’t keep growing a talent, it disappears.”

Yoon Kwang Hun quietly listened to Jeon Hye Jin and laughed as he spoke,

“I understand what you’re worrying about. But I have absolutely no intention on forcing him. Jun Hyuk will make the decision himself. His craving for music is the greatest.”

Jeon Hye Jin’s frustration did not go away. Isn’t he still at the young age of 17? An adult should be able to force young children to lead them into the right path.

“When I listened to Jun Hyuk’s piano, I was surprised because of the way he could identify emotions and not the way he copies. He showed me Dinu Lipatti, Van Cliburn, and Glenn Gould and I thought I was going to pass out.”

She had not showed it that day, but it was true that she had been so surprised she almost fainted.

“But none of the verses showed Jun Hyuk’s own color. How could a child who could excel in piano not have a color of his own? It’s not that he doesn’t have one, but that he’s hiding it.”

“I know that as well. Jun Hyuk is a juke box. If you put a coin in and choose a song, it comes out exactly the same. But isn’t it impressive in itself that he can replicate those greats perfectly?”

“It is impressive. However, don’t you think it’s a waste that a child who can become the greatest pianist in the world is copying others’ songs?”

“Professor.”

Yoon Kwang Hun saw heartfelt worry in Jeon Hye Jin’s eyes.

“Isn’t he a child who plays the piano so well that you almost passed out? There’s no way a child like that doesn’t have a color of his own, is there?”

“Right? It’s only normal for him to have it. I’m asking why he doesn’t reveal it.”

“He doesn’t like his piano.”

“Jun Hyuk said that as well. He said that there are so many people who are better at playing the piano than he is that there’s really no reason for him to play. He said that those people can just play the songs that he composes. But he’s just 17 now. Even if he isn’t as talented as he wants to be, he needs to shape that talent to make it satisfactory. Then he will for sure surpass the greats.”

Yoon Kwang Hun told her the reason with a bitter expression, but Jeon Hye Jin did not fully understand.

“Ah, I guess I didn’t tell you this exactly. It seems he lacks expression. What I was saying is... It isn’t that Jun Hyuk doesn’t like his piano because he isn’t as good as the greats or anything like that.”

“Then?”

“I think it’s better to say that he doesn’t want to face his color. I’ve heard Jun Hyuk’s own piano once.”

Yoon Kwang Hun could not forget the shock from that day.

Yoon Kwang Hun woke up at dawn because his stomach was grumbling and thought of ordering a snack for delivery, but went to the cafe instead. He wanted to eat with Jun Hyuk if he was going to eat anyway.

As soon as he entered the cafe, it was full of the sound of the piano. Jun Hyuk did not realize that Yoon Kwang Hun had come and was engrossed in playing the piano.

He was playing Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 Moonlight.

The 1st verse was so peaceful it was stifling, the 2nd a lively minuet, and the 3rd a vehemence of movement. This configuration showed that it is a different form from other sonatas. Normally, the 1st verse is intense and the 2nd is calm in order to relax. Moonlight is configured in reverse. Its specialty is that it has a dreamlike melody. The whole verse has a stifling peacefulness and the melody is so emotional and beautiful that it causes sadness. It is a song that does not allow the listener to lift his head in relief.

However, Jun Hyuk's interpretation of the song was full of anger.

It was not a moonlight that provided a beautiful light in a dark night.

It was a moonlight that shed light on bloody night with a dingo and wolf fighting over territory.

An explosion of anger after peace, power, and passion in which it felt like one or the other would be ripped apart. That was all.

Yoon Kwang Hun left the cafe quietly so Jun Hyuk would not notice his presence.

Jun Hyuk had only shown him a bright side of himself even if there had been times when he seemed rough and spoke like a thug. Yoon Kwang Hun thought it pathetic that he had expected Jun Hyuk's wounds to have healed over time.

There is no reason for a wound of over 10 years to heal in just 2 years. He knew well where Jun Hyuk's anger was coming from and where it was directed.

"It's better to listen to Jun Hyuk's piano in 10 years. Once Jun Hyuk is able to accept and love himself as he is, I'm sure he'll be playing music that will exceed what you expected. Jun Hyuk's talent isn't the type that will spark and disappear."

Yoon Kwang Hun spoke quietly while thinking of that day, but Professor Jeon Hye Jin could not understand.

"What is Jun Hyuk's piano like right now that you say this?"

"I can't tell you something that he himself does not want to reveal. Sorry."

Yoon Kwang Hun spoke as he looked at a disappointed Professor Jeon Hye Jin,

"I understand how concerned you are about Jun Hyuk, but let's just leave it up to him. He'll do well. And I won't stop you from meeting him to convince him whenever you would like to since I'm sure it's because you care for him."

"You're much better than the parents who have a lot of ambition for their children who have a slight talent."

Jeon Hye Jin calmed herself as she drank her coffee. She had seen so many parents who wanted to make their children's talent into something 10 times what is really was, so she saw Yoon Kwang Hun as the ideal parent with his attitude.

"I don't know. It could be that I have a more objective approach because I'm not his biological parent."

Looking at Yoon Kwang Hun, Professor Jeon Hye Jin felt like she had overstepped her bounds. This is a man who could raise Jun Hyuk as an amazing musician.

"Sir."

"Yes."

"Is Clayton-Hoffman included in the schools he was accepted to?"

"Yes, of course. We couldn't leave it out when it's the most prestigious school in America. We applied and received a letter of acceptance."

"What a relief. I would like to recommend Clayton if you do end up sending Jun Hyuk abroad."

"Can I ask why?"

"Clayton is good in all aspects, but it is especially excellent in composition and commanding education. They provide a lot of support and make arrangements to meet people in the industry. I hope for Jun Hyuk to have a lot of those types of opportunities. Who knows? He might have the chance to conduct the New York Philharmonic's New Year's Concert. Ho ho."

Chapter 95

For the two days after Professor Jeon Hye Jin came and left, Yoon Kwang Hun contemplated some more and sat Jun Hyuk down to talk.

“Jun Hyuk. Can we talk?”

“Sure.”

Jun Hyuk started to feel a little nervous at Yoon Kwang Hun’s serious expression.

“I’m sure you’re already contemplating it, but have you thought about it?”

“Are you talking about studying abroad?”

“Yeah.”

“Honestly, I’m most scared of being by myself again.”

Yoon Kwang Hun saw Jun Hyuk respond without hesitation and knew.

He wants to study music.

He needs an education in order to create better music.

He realized that Jun Hyuk had these thoughts but feared standing alone.

“That means you’re not against going abroad to study with great musicians, right?”

“Yes.”

Yoon Kwang Hun needed persuasion, not force. Something that gives him courage may be necessary.

“Hm... Then you say that you’re becoming independent in a situation like this, not alone.”

“Independence?”

“Yeah. You’re going your own way. There will be a lot of new people waiting for you on that road. You’ll go on living with a repetition of meetings and farewells.”

Farewell. It is the word that Jun Hyuk fears most.

“Then what about you?”

“Me? Are you thinking that going abroad means you’ll be saying bye to me? Why would that happen? I’m your home.”

“Home?”

“Yeah. The home you can come back to at anytime to rest if you ever become tired on that road. That’s me. And that’s not only me. All parents in this world are people who guard their homes to protect their children.”

Yoon Kwang Hun finally said the word ‘parent’. Though he could not say that he is a parent with confidence, he was showing his will to play the same role.

“And all young kids are the same. The only difference is in when this independence comes. You’re just being independent a little faster than most.”

The word ‘parent’ from Yoon Kwang Hun. Jun Hyuk who had heard it clearly put his head down and could not lift it for a while.

When he raised it again, he had a bright expression as though nothing had happened.

“Do you want me to go abroad?”

“Of course. But if you say you don’t want to, I’m not going to force you. And I hope you don’t think that you should go just because I want you to.”

“Can I think about it some more?”

“Take all the time you need. Like I just said, I’m okay with whatever path you take. I won’t even stop you if you decide to become an idol singer. Ha ha.”

Yoon Kwang Hun gave Jun Hyuk the freedom of choice, but it also seemed like the time for him to become independent had come.

Jun Hyuk felt like he would never forget the day he got his license. It was the first exam he had ever taken and he passed it in one go. He did not know that it felt this great to pass a test.

When he got his license and went back to the dealership to buy the Ducati Monster, the manager and staff were out. In exchange for taking a few pictures, they gave them celebrity discounts and sent the bike to the cafe on the back of a truck.

For Jun Hyuk who had only practiced for the license exam on a 250cc, the 700cc is a monster like its name. He did not have the technique to control this monster that rushed forward at the slightest touch.

Eventually, Jun Hyuk became absorbed in the joy of riding once he enrolled in a riders' club as Yoon Kwang Hun had said and learned to control the monster himself.

There are quite a lot of people who do not have to work for a living in this world. There were a lot of people whose jobs were unknown who participated in the riding club everyday. Jun Hyuk did not care about music until he rode with these men so often that he was able to ride at 180km/h without fear.

He went out in the morning and did not return until sundown, and there were times when he did not come back for a few days. His long-distance rides on nationwide routes became more frequent.

Yoon Kwang Hun did not nag at Jun Hyuk about anything other than riding safely, and only asked about the destination of the riders.

He was also busy moving into the newly built cafe.

He created a soundproofed studio in the basement and was going to look into the best equipment to fill it with when Jun Hyuk said they should push it off.

That is when Yoon Kwang Hun understood Jun Hyuk's intentions. Even if he brought in the best equipment, there would be no reason to use it. He also realized that Jun Hyuk was riding his motorcycle all over the country in order to make memories before he went abroad.

After falling into riding for 3 months, Jun Hyuk suddenly did not come out of the studio. He wrestled with the guitar and drums for a month and came out of his studio with a large stack of scores.

“Were you locked up making a new song?”

“Yes. I was thinking of making an album with this.”

“Album?”

“Yes. Teacher Jo Hyung Joong said that he wants to work on my first album.”

“Really? What’s the genre?”

Yoon Kwang Hun put out his hand with an expression full of anticipation. However, Jun Hyuk put the scores under his arm and put his hand down.

“Listen to it if the record comes out. I’m not going to show you the score. Ke ke.”

Jun Hyuk put the scores in his backpack and got on his motorcycle. The Ducati Monster he had treated like a lover had become a means of transportation.

“Teacher, it’s been a long time.”

“Oh, Jun Hyuk. How have you been? I’ve spoken to Yoon Kwang Hun over the phone a few times... I heard you’re into riding these days?”

When Jun Hyuk walked in with his helmet, Jo Hyung Joong was surprised by how much he had changed in a matter of months.

His face had not changed in any way other than getting a little tanned, but he looked more mature. He had gained confidence.

“Now it’s just... withering. I rode as much as I wanted. Teacher.”

“Yeah.”

“I wanted to start working on an album. Do you have time?”

“Of course. I’ve been waiting. I just didn’t push you because I figured you needed to rest after having a hard time with the broadcast. Wait a second. I’ll have to tell Jung Su to hurry over.”

Jo Hyung Joong called Yoon Jung Su to bolt over and chat with Jun Hyuk until he

arrived.

The two versions of Kanon had not brought in as much profits as they had expected, but they had gained tremendous profits in advertisements because it had explosive views on YouTube. Jun Hyuk had been surprised by the number that came up in his bank account. The \$20,000 he had earned in modeling fees was nothing.

As soon as Yoon Jung Su arrived, Jun Hyuk went through his backpack and pulled out the score. Jun Hyuk had a total of 10 songs. They varied from 2 minutes 40 seconds to 5 minutes 10 seconds. The overall running time was 40 minutes.

The two men looked excitedly through the thick stack of scores.

“Are these all new songs?”

“Yes. I didn’t move from the studio for a month and made these.”

Jo Hyung Joong and Yoon Jung Su looked through the ten scores carefully and put them down.

“You haven’t arranged them yet?”

“No, because you both said that you would work on the album.”

However, the scores had the clear message about the genre. It was also a request to preserve the genre. There were various genres mixed in including a light ballad, blues, jazz, rock, and powerful heavy metal.

“Oh right. There’s an order to these tracks. I wrote the numbers at the top of the scores... We have to put them in that order.”

Arranging the track order also meant that he had already chosen the title song.

“Jun Hyuk, this is your first album. We have to arrange it together. It’s not like you aren’t able to or anything.”

Jo Hyung Joong had a puzzled expression. The joy of working with Jun Hyuk. He wanted to savor the happiness of seeing his talent.

However, Jun Hyuk laughed without responding. Yoon Jung Su was so absorbed in the

scores that he had not seen Jun Hyuk's face and was mumbling.

"Looking at this, it seems there's a concept. There's a motif melody hiding in each song."

"Yes. I listened to the 1st album of Wild Chrysanthemum Teacher Jo mentioned again carefully."

Wild Chrysanthemum's debut album, the best record in the history of Korean pop music. Jo Hyung Joong had said that he wanted to make an album to surpass this with Jun Hyuk.

"They had incorporated the theme of their title song, 'March', into the other songs. It was incredible. I didn't realize at first even when he used the lyrics of March in the title of other songs."

"So are you saying that you used that technique in all of your songs?"

"Yes. That way, it won't be lacking to say that it's a concept album."

"Then what's the concept you want to get out of this?"

"There isn't a big meaning... but I guess you could just see it as a day in the cafe."

"A day in the cafe?"

"Yes. Cleaning in the morning, opening the doors, doing business, closing the cafe, cleaning. I made this the concept."

The sharp Yoon Jung Su finally took his eyes off of the scores and whistled.

"The cafe owner will be happy."

Jo Hyung Joong just blinked at Yoon Jung Su's words out of the blue.

"Hyung Joong, this seems like a song Jun Hyuk made for the cafe owner. And it means that he was happy every single day he spent at the cafe. Is that right?"

It seemed Yoon Jung Su's guess was not wrong from the way Jun Hyuk smiles without responding.

They had thought it contained a great meaning, but it was just a day in the cafe. Jo Hyung Joong who had thought that Jun Hyuk's music style was too grand to capture a simple daily life, nodded.

"I see. I was wondering why the ten songs are so refreshing. Alright, since it's your first album... it might be something definite."

He made the theme of his first album himself instead of bringing it in from elsewhere. This in itself is a great development. Yoon Jung Su was even pleased that Jun Hyuk finally realized how to put his own story in his music when he had been the one who said he heard music in all sounds.

"Jun Hyuk certainly has classical running through his blood. I think this follows the flow of classical. The introduction – chorus – middle portion – reappearance of the chorus – you configured it as a coda?"

"Yes. I made the album as if it were one song and then remade that into 10 songs."

They could easily create a concept album. The consumer who could recognize the melodic concept would be able to enjoy it fully.

"This is great. The framework is perfect. I guess the key will be how you build on it."

The two men could not stop complimenting him, but their expressions were not very bright. It did not feel like it would be popular. The two had not thought of creating music that would sell well from the beginning. However, people tend to aim for success while they are at it.

"Jung Su, can you write the lyrics quickly? There are 10 songs."

"Since Jun Hyuk created a concept. I'm thinking of writing the lyrics with the concept in mind. It won't take very long."

Yoon Jung Su is good at creating lyrics with everyday language. He thought that it would be perfect if he included Jun Hyuk's desire to say thank you to the cafe owner, his joy in working with music everyday at the cafe, and even a farewell.

There was no longer talk of studying abroad, but will he not leave the country at some point? It would not be bad to say farewell to the person he is grateful to in advance.

Yoon Jung Su did not take his eyes off of the score and Jo Hyung Joong was locked in thought.

"Then who would be fitting to sing the songs? There's no need to worry about the session since Jun Hyuk can play it himself."

At this, Jun Hyuk said something surprising.

"Teacher, since this album is something we're making all together, I wanted to leave the session to other people. And I'll leave the arranging and producing entirely up to the both of you."

Again, the sharp Yoon Jung Su understood Jun Hyuk perfectly. He could tell from what Jun Hyuk was saying that he would be going abroad as soon as the album is completed.

That is why he is leaving everything including the arrangement and performance up to others. He would be able to remember every person he worked with on the album whenever he listened to it.

"You want to cherish the memories?"

Yoon Jung Su mumbled. It was a tone at which they could not tell if he was talking to himself or asking a question.

".....Yes."

Jun Hyuk's cautious response meant that Yoon Jung Su's prediction was correct. He was sad when he actually heard the response.

Then his shoulders suddenly became heavy. An album capturing Jun Hyuk's memories. He would listen to it in another country while thinking of his motherland. Unless it was perfect, it would not serve Jun Hyuk's purpose.

"Alright. Then let's leave the drums to the drummer of Steel Blade and I'll ask Jong Suk about the bass. And of course we'll have to ask Teacher Hwang Suk Min for the orchestra part."

Jo Hyung Joong thought of Jun Hyuk's moments on broadcast and thought of each person who had worked with him.

"The problem is choosing the contributing singers since I'm going to think of the singer while I write the lyrics. Jang Na Rae, Kwak Hye Sung, Nam Seung Hee... Who else should we call?"

Yoon Jung Su said the name of each person who was connected to Jun Hyuk.

"Lee Hae Jun."

"Hae Jun?"

"Yes, we were roommates."

"Right, that's true. Good, then Hae Jun. Also, we'll have to call those 2 guys too."

"Who?"

"The rappers you met in the preliminaries. We can think about whether we want to use them for a rap featuring as we arrange the songs."

While Yoon Jung Su was thinking of the people that Jun Hyuk was linked to, he started joking and spoke while laughing,

"Jun Hyuk, don't you have to sing a song? This time, you'll sing it properly."

Jun Hyuk's face turned bright red.

"Ugh! Why are you being like this? From now on, I'm only going to sing by myself in a karaoke room... No, I'm just not going to sing."

Jo Hyung Joong spoke to Yoon Jung Su when he saw Jun Hyuk panicking,

"Jung Su, why don't you sing a song for the first time in a while?"

"Honestly, I do want to sing, but... I'm not confident. Let's think about that after writing all of the lyrics."

He knew that Jo Hyung Joong was joking, but it is music that he would like to work with. But all of the people who would sing are young and fresh. It is inevitable that he would be compared to them the second he sang... He needs to hold back.

After Yoon Jung Su looked at all of the scores, he thought of the best way to wrap up the album's ending.

"Jun Hyuk, I think an instrumental would be best for this last track. What do you think about ending it on the piano?"

"Okay. Like I just said, I'll follow your direction."

Jun Hyuk left the studio after deciding on a day to come back to record his part.

When the two men were alone, they faced each other and realized that they had left out the most important part.

"Hyung Joong, what's the title of the album?"

"Jang Jun Hyuk."

"What? Jang Jun Hyuk album 1? Isn't it too ordinary?"

"No, let's just go with Jang Jun Hyuk. This could become the first and last album he releases in Korea. Doesn't it have no meaning that it's the 1st album? It could become Jang Jun Hyuk's only Korean album."

Chapter 96

After Jun Hyuk and Yoon Jung Su had left, Jo Hyung Joong recalled something he had completely forgotten.

‘How could I have not sent that yet.’

Jo Hyung Joong listened to the sound and voice a few times and picked up his phone.

“Professor, this is Jo Hyung Joong. Have you been well?”

“Oh, Teacher Kim. Yeah, and you?”

“I’ve been doing well thanks to you.”

Professor Ju Yong Tae, the 1st choice as a speaker for midnight programs introducing classical music, was talking to Jo Hyung Joong for the first time in a while. His fate with Jo Hyung Joong they participated in a forum program about popular and classical music.

Thanks to Jo Hyung Joong’s introductions, he often received requests to write classical OSTs for soap operas. This brought him a fair amount of money. He did have anticipation for Jo Hyung Joong’s call.

“So is something up?”

“Yes. I’m going to send you an e-mail. I’m sorry, I should have gone looking for you myself.”

“No, it’s okay. Aren’t you a busy person? What’s in the message?”

“There’s a song that someone I’m keeping my eye on wrote, and I was wondering if you would take a look at it.”

“Ho ho. What do I know about popular music? You’re more of an expert in that area.”

“It’s... not popular music, but a symphony.”

“Symphony?”

“Yes.”

Why is a classical composer sending a score to a popular music composer? Professor Ju became curious.

“Really? Who is it? It won’t be someone I know... Is it someone from abroad?”

If it were someone that Professor Ju knew, he would not have needed to go through Jo Hyung Joong. He would have just come to him directly.

“Ah... No. He’s a total rookie. That’s why I would like to get your definitive opinion.”

“A symphony for a total rookie? Ho ho. Sure. I’ll take a look and call you.”

Professor Ju turned his computer on and checked his e-mail. Four files were attached to the e-mail that Jo Hyung Joong sent. The file names concerto 1 to 4 stood out to him.

Professor downloaded all of the files and sent the 1st concerto to the printer first. Reading from printer paper was easier for his senile eyes than from a computer monitor.

The professor read through the score carefully and without looking at more than half of the first, he frowned and crumpled it, throwing it into the waste bin.

He coughed a few times to shake the unpleasant feeling and picked up his phone.

“Teacher Kim, it’s me.”

“Yes, Professor. Did you see it?”

“What in the world is this? Is this garbage what you call music these days?”

“Is... Is that so?”

Garbage. The most severe criticism that Professor Ju Yong Tae could say was garbage. It was to the point where students had to expect F grades if they heard the word garbage come from Professor Ju’s mouth.

"You call this music? It's just uncomfortable noise. I don't know who it is, but it seems like he's just imitating contemporary music... Even listening to a little of it is uncomfortable. It isn't music. It's just a parody. This is made by a fake who just tries to look cool, thinking that he has a high standard and is philosophical."

Garbage created by a fake who acts cool. This was Professor Ju's final evaluation.

"Ah, I see. I'm sorry about this. I made you uncomfortable with an unnecessary request."

Jo Hyung Joong quickly hung up the phone. Could it be that a young genius' work is just play? This elder is one of the most famous classical composers and professors in Korea, and he is a renowned critic of classical music. If a man like that assessed someone's music as garbage, there is a high probability that it does not have much value.

'I bet. He's only just 17 years old... For a beginner who hasn't learned any composing techniques... a symphony is too much.'

Even so, there is no reason to be disappointed in the talent that Jun Hyuk had shown until now. The arrangement and composition he showed in popular music showed that he is plenty qualified to be called a hit maker.

Professor Ju Yong Tae poured criticism on Jo Hyung Joong, but the discomfort that the music left with him did not go away. He went outside because he thought that he at least needed fresh air to clear his mind. The professor took the full waste bin and went outside.

"Oh, Professor. Give that to me. I'll empty it for you."

"Ms. Mi Sun, thank you."

The young Mi Sun, who works in the department office, emptied the full waste bin into the recycling bin.

Graduate school professor Um Ki Jun gathered the paper cups towering up on his desk with both hands and walked toward the recycling bin.

As he was turning around after throwing out the cups, the music scores caught his eye. They were scores that he would not have normally paid attention to. In a building with

the school of music, scores are common garbage.

The scores caught his eye because they were on printer paper. Um Ki Jun always pushed his students to buy sheet music no matter what. If they get used to reading the sheet music downloaded from the internet, scores become unfamiliar to the eye.

Um Ki Jun took the scores. He thought that he would need to show them to his students the next day to nag at them. Curiosity also started forming.

He went back to his room and looked over the sheets, wondering what scores they were that they had been tossed in the garbage.

His eyes widened when he saw the first page because of the notes that appeared. A score difficult to find inside the school. Notes dancing irregularly. It is contemporary music. He had not yet seen a student who like contemporary music enough to print the scores.

Also, not just he the advisory professor, but most of the music professors hated contemporary music.

Um Ki Jun's curiosity rose and he started reading the scores. Before he could even turn the first page, his head was already numb with surprise and the music filled the room as he turned the pages.

The music burned Um Ki Jun's body like the neverending fire of hell. It felt like a goblin covered in sharp thorns was breaking his bones into pieces.

He put the score down a few times. It was too painful to withstand the pain. He put the score down several times and when he put it down for the last time, he even felt like his bones had become dust and his skin had been ripped apart.

"Ha..... Goodness....."

This word came out without his knowing if it was a sigh or if it was in admiration. Whose work could it be? Since he started playing the piano in elementary school, he had listened to classical music for 20 years but this is the first time hearing such a shocking song. It seems like a 20th century song from its form, but he could not remember it no matter what.

How could he not know a work like this!

The last page of the score seemed to be speaking to Um Ki Jun.

The magic is not yet over.

You have to experience more of this pain.

Until your body becomes ashes, the flames will not go away.

The score told him that this is just the 1st concerto. How would the 2nd concerto be deployed and how would the finale be executed?

Um Ki Jun wanted to see more. He wanted to listen to more of it. Um Ki Jun ran to the dump again. He searched the area he had just picked up the score from, but could not find a single sheet.

There is no reason for the students to be looking at music like this... Could it be one of the professors? Or had someone written it themselves?

He did not even dream of going to ask the professors. Old people worshipping classicism and romanticism. They are just antiquated elders who do not go near contemporary music.

He could already see how these old people who even thought Stravinsky's music to be bizarre would react to this score. This place is full of closed people who worship Beethoven and Bach.

Then could it be that one of the students found this while surfing the internet?

Um Ki Jun wanted to know either the score's owner or at least the person who printed it no matter what.

Chapter 97

As Um Ki Jun went into his undergraduate classes and master's seminars, he carried the score with him and started asking around. However, everyone shook their heads saying that it was their first time seeing the score. There were a few who showed interest in the music, but he did not have any intention to discuss it with them. The important thing is to find the composer.

He looked for a week, but he could not find the source. Eventually, everyone except the professors he had not asked had shaken their heads saying they were seeing it for the first time.

Um Ki Jun decided to check the remaining possibility. He assumed that the song had already been released and someone had downloaded it off of the internet. It could be a song that is not yet known in Korea, a wasteland for contemporary music.

Um Ki Jun scanned the score again and sent it to Park Ji Kuk, a college classmate studying abroad in San Francisco. His classmate said that he was seeing it for the first time and was sure it is an unpublished song since he had gone to America to study contemporary music.

After sending the mail to his classmate, he did not get a response for a day. He thought that it was an emotion that only he had felt. It is like when not all people who see Picasso's works of cubism are in awe.

Due to the time difference, a call at dawn told him that he had not felt it alone.

"Hello?"

"Hey! Um Ki Jun!"

"What? Why all of a sudden?"

"Tell me honestly. Where did this song come from? You didn't write it, did you?"

Park Jin Kuk's voice of anger hit him hard.

“Lower your voice! I can hear well. So, you saw the e-mail?”

“Hurry up and just answer. Did you really write it?”

“I would have sent the sheet program file if I had written it. That was printed.”

“Then whose is this?”

“I sent it to you because I don’t know that. Look into it. You know it’s hard to find new works here. This is the first time you’re hearing it? It’s really unpublished?”

“Of course. If a work like this had been published, it would’ve already been a big deal. You really don’t know? Then where did it come from?”

Um Ki Jun went through how the score had come into his hands.

“Does that mean there’s a genius hidden in our school? No way.”

“You think that’s possible? The score I scanned was printed. Or it was downloaded and printed.”

There was no way a student who could write a song like this would not have stood out. He would have been revealed through the countless assignment pieces and reports.

“None of those old farts at the school would have written it... Where did this guy come from?”

“It seems great even to you, right?”

“No need to say it. This is a really novel take. I don’t know how to express it.”

“Exactly. There’s a big chance the person who wrote this doesn’t go to our school. Doesn’t it seem most likely that someone found this on the internet somewhere?”

“To write such an innovative song and just put on the internet? Then that means this person is nameless.....”

“Is Marco Giavelli still at your school? The principal conductor of the San Francisco Philharmonic.”

"Oh, right. That man. He doesn't come out to the school. He completely retired."

"Can you get in contact with him? Try showing it to him. Let's see what he thinks of it."

"Why do we need to check that. You can tell it's a work of art just by looking at it."

"Stop playing around. You don't know this industry? Don't you know it doesn't matter if nameless people like us like it?"

A society where the people with authority make evaluations and where that is the only opinion that counts. If this music were to be assessed as a work of art by Maestro Marco Giavelli, who was once one of the best conductors, there would be no need to question it any longer.

"Alright, that would be better. And who knows? He might know who the composer is. Or it might be easy to find out who it is through his connections."

"I'll keep looking too, so call me right away if you find anything out."

Um Ki Jun was still so excited after hanging up with Park Jin Kuk that he was no longer sleepy.



Park Jin Kuk used what little money he had to buy a box of high quality Cuban cigars, and went to Marco Giavelli's mansion. When he was serving as professor, Park Jin Kuk had come face-to-face with him nearly everyday, but it had become rare since he retired.

He prepared the cigars that Marco Giavelli likes because he felt sorry to go looking for him with a favor instead of just visiting.

Marco Giavelli greeted his former student with a friendliness that made it feel as though they had seen each other the day before, and laughed when Park Jin Hyuk gave him the cigars.

"You still remember what I like?"

"I'm sorry, I should have come to visit more often."

"It's okay. When you get old, there are more times when it becomes bothersome for visitors to come. All you have to do is occasionally check on me to make sure I'm still alive. Ho ho."

After chatting for a bit, Park Jin Kuk slowly handed the score over to him.

"Maestro, can you take a look at this?"

"What is this? Did you compose this?"

"No. I would like to hear what you think about it once you take a look."

Marco Giavelli lit a cigar and after taking a deep puff, he relished the fragrance and started to read the score.

Before he had even turned the first page, the cigar was getting to its end in the ashtray. He had forgotten he lit a cigar because he could not take his eyes off of the score.

Even the old man called a maestro was no different from Um Ki Jun or Park Jin Kuk. He sighed deeply and put the score down multiple times, and put the score down after almost an hour.

"What do you think? Maestro, is this a song you know?"

Park Jin Kuk saw that he had put the score down and spoke carefully.

"This... Who wrote this kind of song....."

Maestro Giavelli's stammering indicated that it was indeed his first time seeing the song.

"I don't know either. It came into my hands by chance. We are looking for the composer now."

Marco Giavelli suddenly stood up from his chair and poured two glasses of wine from his refrigerator.

"Have a drink. I must have one because my hands are shaking so much."

Park Jin Kuk took the glass and felt delighted inside. He had not seen it wrong. This work is a masterpiece.

"Maestro, I would like to hear your honest assessment of this piece."

"But why do you only have the 1st score? Is it incomplete?"

"We are checking that as well. I just have the score by chance."

"I didn't know I would get to see such a masterpiece before I die."

The first assessment is 'masterpiece'. This is praise beyond expectations.

"This song is... hm... How should I say it? Right. Should I say it opened a new door in music?"

"A new door?"

"Yes. In the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, music was a tool to deliver a beautiful emotion to the listener. As we came to the present time, it gained a role in delivering that emotion. Loneliness, sadness. Anger. Happiness, et cetera. It also throws philosophical messages as well."

Marco took a sip of his wine.

"But this song is showing that now, music can relay senses."

"You say senses?"

"Yes. This song is relaying physical pain. Not the emotion of pain, but the pain itself."

When we watch a movie with a scene where someone is getting beat up or being tortured, our bodies flinch. We are imagining that pain. Contemporary music exists to transmit that imagination.

To follow the assessment, this music has the power to allow for an indirect experience.

"Didn't you have a hard time looking at this score?"

"It was hard. It's just a 10-minute song, but it took an hour to read through all of it. It was painful to keep turning the pages."

"That's it right there. With just the music, you have the thought that someone is hitting

you – no. No it's not a thought. No, it's at the level where your brain sends the signal that you are being beaten. That's what I mean when I say it relays senses."

Marco Giavelli lit the cigar again and closed his eyes to enjoy it without speaking.

Park Jin Kuk quietly waited to see what else he would say, and heard something unexpected.

"Hm... What a waste."

"Excuse me? What are you saying is a waste.....?"

"I was wondering if it would be possible to hear this song in real life."

"Don't worry about it, maestro. We're going to find the composer and we'll get the rest of the scores."

The maestro waved his hand at Park Jin Kuk's words.

"That's not what I meant. I was saying that it might be impossible to perform this song."

"Ah....."

That is when Park Jin Kuk understood what he meant when he said that he might not be able to hear the song.

"Who would perform this? What orchestra can perform this? Will the members and conductor be able to handle the pain they have to experience while they perform? It's already this difficult to imagine it while reading the score. And that's just the 1st score. But until the 4th? I don't think I'd be able to do it."

Marco Giavelli shook his head.

"Say that someone could perform it. How many audiences do you think there will be for this kind of music?"

Park Jin Kuk drank his wine in one gulp, but his frustration did not go away. He had not considered the audience.

"For the people who are able to understand the music, it'll be too hard for them to listen to it. For the people who can't understand, it'll just be noise. There are only a few people who can listen to this. Is there a planner who would put this on stage?"

It is a masterpiece, but a performance may be impossible. Who is the person who created this kind of dilemma?

"Even so, I want to meet this composer no matter what. Is it okay for me to show this score to my friends? There could be someone who knows whose work this is."

"Of course. That's actually what I wanted to ask of you."

Park Jin Kuk was satisfied with hearing Maestro Giavelli's evaluation, but was kept repeating his gratefulness that he would be willing to help in the search for the composer.

As soon as Park Jin Kuk came out of Marco Giavelli's home, he called Um Ki Jun to tell him what happened.

"Ki Jun, we were right. The Maestro didn't hold back on compliments. He liked it more than we did."

"Of course. It's a work of art in anyone's eyes. Except to the old farts at our school."

The two men relaxed after confirming the work's value. It was up to here. Now they just have the difficult job of finding the person who made the song.

"Ki Jun, try checking with the professors too."

"Are you stupid? You're saying that because you don't know? I'm dead the day I bring up the word 'modernism'."

"Just ask them slightly. Don't show them the score."

Chapter 98

A few professors were eating lunch in the cafeteria with Professor Ju Yong Tae in the center when Um Ki Jun greeted them and joined.

People let their guards down the most while eating. Um Ki Jun did not lose his chance and spoke in passing,

“I saw some kids interested in contemporary music these days.....”

“Who? Among the students? Could that happen? They’re all pretty similar. How could kids who stumble even with Debussy be interested in contemporary music?”

Professor Ju Yong Tae added to one professor’s response pushing off Um Ki Jun’s words lightly,

“Music isn’t the object of criticism and theory. It’s a tool for emotion. Contemporary music plays the same role as a discussion, throwing a question. It can be used for research, but it’s unreasonable to treat it as music itself.”

The most old-fashioned Professor Ju dismissed everything with his continuing words,

“Um. I told you, didn’t I? Don’t look in that direction. We’re overwhelmed just by trying to understand Bach, Beethoven, and Marlowe.”

“Oy, Professor. Of course. My taste isn’t in that direction either. I just thought I heard something like that, so I was wondering if you might have given the students an assignment.”

“That kind of assignment would be fitting for a master’s course. Wait a second... Um, you’re a little suspicious.”

“Ha ha. Surely not. The subject of my Ph.D. thesis is Sibelius.”

The reaction they had expected. Um Ki Jun thought that there would be unnecessary misunderstandings if they kept discussing it, and quickly stopped. He decided it would be faster for Park Jin Kuk to do the search, and quit looking for the composer inside

the school.

Jun Hyuk went to the recording studio after getting a call from Jo Hyung Joong. The recording studio was reminiscent of a garbage dump when it greeted Jun Hyuk. The stairs going down to the basement had a few empty dishes from Chinese take-out and when he opened the door to go in, the first thing he saw was the sound engineer asleep on the sofa.

Energy drinks and canned coffees were rolling around near the sofa and throughout the recording studio.

“Oh Jun Hyuk, you’re here.”

“Yes. You look... You look like you haven’t even gone home in a few days.”

“Huh? Ah, that’s all of us. We used to do this all the time, but to be honest, it’s been easier these days because people only work on singles. I feel like I’m really working for the first time in a while. It’s been years since I’ve had to work on 10 songs at the same time.”

He looked so tired that his chubby face had become gaunt, but he looked happy. He is creating real music, not the kind that does not even cover the basics unless it was touched up with equipment, with its mechanical effects and a simple hook inserted repetitively.

In order to receive the evaluation that it is an outstanding album, Jo Hyung Joong did not permit even the smallest mistakes and demanded perfection. Thanks to this, the staff he worked with were becoming zombies.

“Jun Hyuk, listen to this first. It’s the guitar you’ll record. Let’s talk after you listen to all of it.”

Jun Hyuk took the CD from Jo Hyung Joong and listened to a total of 6 guitar instrumentals through headphones. An acoustic guitar melody rang through his head and he became lost in the music. Jun Hyuk listened to it a few times before taking the headphones off.

“Teacher. This guitar... Who performed it?”

“It’s killer, right?”

“Yes. Who did it?”

“Teacher Ham Chun Suk. Do you know who he is?”

“No, I’m hearing the name for the first time.”

“I bet. The musical area he works in is a little different.”

Ham Chun Suk.

The best acoustic guitar session man from 1990 until now.

When the best singers in the country needed an acoustic guitar, they always went looking for him. They looked for him even when they did not need an acoustic guitar to see if their song might be better with an acoustic guitar. It is common to see his name in albums that sold well in the country.

It is also a fun fact that this expert in the guitar who sees it as a tool to relay emotion instead of technique, majored in singing.

“But why is 6 songs it?”

“Since one song is heavy metal, I’m going to leave it entirely up to you, and I arranged the other 3 songs without the guitar. And you know about the last song. We’re going to end with a piano instrumental.”

“Ah, I see. But.....”

“Why? Is there something you don’t like?”

“No. It’s just that of these, there are 2 songs that are so good I don’t think I’ll need to play them again. Even if I play them again, I don’t think they’ll come out better than this.”

“What? Only 2 songs? Then you’re saying you’ll modify the other 4 songs? I’m pretty sure you’re the only person in our country who listened to Teacher Ham Chun Sung’s guitar and said there’s something to fix. Ha ha.”

After laughing for a bit, Jo Hyung Joong’s eyes sparked.

His name often appears in movies. He is great who gets paid just for listening to music and saying, "This doesn't need the guitar. It's good just like this."

The fact that he could find something lacking in the guitar of Ham Chun Sung who expresses the beauty in marginals. It is wonderful to see how he develops everyday.

"Then, should we start?"

The first song Jun Hyuk played in the recording booth was heavy metal. When he got to the middle, the sound engineer shook his head and tried to hit the stop button, but Jo Hyung Joong made a fuss.

"Hey! Why? What are you doing?"

"It seems like the BPM went over 170. We arranged this to 150."

Jo Hyung Joong lightly hit the back of the sound engineer's head.

"Why are you being like this when you've been doing this for so long? It's 150."

"Excuse me? Isn't the guitar acting completely on its own? I think 170 is pretty low."

"Are you going to keep doing this work? Don't you think you have to change this now? Man, it's not fast just grand. It's okay for a lay person to make that mistake, but you're a professional. How is it okay for you to not be able to tell the difference? And... you don't know that kid? He has a metronome embedded in his head."

When Jun Hyuk came out of the booth, the sound engineer could not look him in the eye and Jo Hyung Joong had a satisfied smile.

"Is it too hard?"

"Huh? Oh, no. It's hard but light. It's good. Let's use this the way it is for now... We can talk about it again if there's something to change in the completed song."

When the following guitar and piano accompaniments were finished, Jo Hyung Joong could see a more matured Jun Hyuk.

Jun Hyuk showed him what was lacking in Ham Chun Suk's guitar. He picked at the strings slowly, but he kept the flow going without a single disconnected note. It was to

the point where he thought it was a waste to use as an accompaniment. This alone is excellent independent music.

Today is a day full of regret for Jo Hyung Joong. It is the last day he is able to listen to Jun Hyuk's music alongside him. He did not know how he would hear Jun Hyuk's music going forward, but it would only be possible through a media like a CD.

Studying abroad also meant that he was going into the world of classical, farther away from popular music.

It could be that he is embarking on his own path. There is someone who assessed his Symphony No. 1 as nothing more than noise. However, Jo Hyung Joong was sure that if he received formal education and associated himself with others including the greats, there would be someone who appreciates his music.

"Jun Hyuk, the kids are going to start coming in to sing tomorrow. What do you want to do? Do you want to come and watch?"

"No. I'll listen to it once it's all over."

"Alright. I guess there's no real reason to remember their faces. Their sounds will remain."

Once Jun Hyuk left the recording studio, Jo Hyung Joong began to bother the staff again.

"Don't even dream about the sauna until Jun Hyuk's guitar is complete."

Chapter 99

Pianist Go Sae Won and Yoon Kwang Hun spread out a list of music schools and discussed it for days. Yoon Kwang Hun wanted new and innovative music over classical, and was already leaning towards America. Go Sae Won had consistently pushed for Europe, but had to give up at Jun Hyuk's input.

"I can barely speak English, so when do I learn French, German, or Italian? Let's just go with America."

After the study abroad location was decided, Jun Hyuk's hardships began.

"Sir."

"....."

"Sir... Ah. English."

Jun Hyuk started with a sigh again. After they decided on studying abroad, Yoon Kwang Hun made a rule that they could only speak in English, and glared without responding if he spoke in Korean.

He had learned English from Yoon Kwang Hun every day for 2 years and had practiced free speech for an hour each day. He realized, however, that the English he had studied over 2 years were just eye-level classes. When Yoon Kwang Hun spoke proper English quickly, Jun Hyuk could not understand a single word.

"American or western kids will speak much faster and their pronunciation will be more exact. I'm pretty sure you'll have to at least be able to listen to me to barely understand them."

Jun Hyuk buried himself in English for 24 hours a day at Yoon Kwang Hun's threat. Studying English was harder and more boring than studying for his license exam. But it had to be done.



While Jo Hyung Joong and Yoon Jung Su were busy working on the album, Jun Hyuk was so excited he could not sleep. He would be going to America for a month. Because of the nerves he had from going abroad for the first time, he stayed up all night packing and unpacking his bag before going to the airport early in the morning.

When they arrived at the airport, there were already a lot of reporters waiting for them. Jo Hyung Joong had let his trip to America slip because it would become great marketing.

“Have you decided on a school?”

“How many years will you be abroad for?”

“Are you completely folding your activities in Korea now?”

“Piano or composition – which major have you chosen?”

In the midst of flashes and questions, Lawyer Baek Seung Ho stepped forward.

“There are a lot of questions, but we only have one answer. All we are doing is looking into schools. He will be interviewing with various schools and we do not yet know the result. Wherever he goes, it will be the best choice for Jun Hyuk.”

Yoon Kwang Hun and Jun Hyuk completed a simple interview and rushed their departure procedures.

“Sir, we’re not standing in line?”

“No, we’re in first class.”

“First?”

As it was Jun Hyuk’s first time going abroad and being at an airport, his eyes kept flitting back and forth and Baek Seung Ho laughed while saying,

“It’s the area with the best seats on the plane. It’s my gift to you. Can a top star be uncomfortable in economy?”

Baek Seung Ho watched the two disappear through the gates and turned around.

Once they retrieved their boarding passes and got through immigration, many people were taking peeks at Jun Hyuk and gathered to ask for signatures and photographs.

"Let's hurry up and go. There's a separate lounge for first class, so we can wait there."

Yoon Kwang Hun led Jun Hyuk by the hand and quietly ran to the lounge where they could wait until their departure time. The lounge for first class passengers was full of various drinks and snacks, so Jun Hyuk did not sit for a moment and was busy filling his stomach.

Jun Hyuk's jaw dropped at the sight of the first class area, which he had only ever heard of. It looked like there was a small room screened off inside the plane.

"Don't look around like that like it's a different world. From now on, you'll only ride first class. You might even be able to buy a private plane."

Yoon Kwang Hun believed that the day would come.

After looking around for a while, Jun Hyuk fell asleep quickly because he had spent the previous night awake.

When Jun Hyuk took his first step in America, the sudden change in scenery and environment made him look on in wonder like when he had first seen the Ducati.

For one month, Yoon Kwang Hun took Jun Hyuk to all of the schools he had received acceptance letters from. Jun Hyuk was more excited because it felt like he was on vacation with Yoon Kwang Hun for the first time than he was that they were looking into schools.

Music schools in America are generally divided to the conservatory, geared towards practicality, and university which includes the liberal arts. The audition process for the two schools is similar, but because there is a great difference in the subjects that must be completed after entering, students dreaming of becoming professional performers prefer conservatories.

Julliard is a 'conservatory' where world-renowned Korean musicians like Jung Kyung Hwa, Jung Myung Hwa, Jung Myung Hun, Sara Jang, Kang Dong Suk, and Shin Young Ok passed through.

On the other hand, universities like Yale University, USC, and UCLA are basically schools of music.

The two started in Boston at Berkley and traveled to Pia Curtis in Philadelphia and Cleveland University School of Music in Ohio. Before going to their last destination, New York, Yoon Kwang Hun went to New Orleans, the hometown of jazz.

They went to clubs every night to enjoy the zest of improv performances and even rented a car to ride Highway 61, the so-called road of rock and roll.

This highway running through the middle of America goes to Beale Street in Memphis. The studio that Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, and Jerry Lee Lewis stood in. They touched on places like Stax Records, the Holy Land of soul music, and visited various places that gave birth to the music Jun Hyuk had heard in albums. And lastly, they went to New York which is basically Yoon Kwang Hun's second home.

Proving that New York is the center for American culture, it holds Julliard, the Manhattan Conservatory, Mannes School of Music, and Eastman School of Music.

When Yoon Kwang Hun came out of the airport in New York, he quickly caught a taxi into Manhattan.

New York may as well have been his 2nd hometown. He organized his luggage at the hotel in Manhattan and took Jun Hyuk out to start sightseeing. Recalling his 3 years as an MBA and 5 years on Wall Street, he told Jun Hyuk about his memories.

They ended their travels while admiring a Broadway musical and visited the final school of music.

Clayton-Hoffman Institute of Music is the representative school of music in New York and New Jersey. It is usually called the CH School of Music.

When Clayton founded the school in 1929, its doors opened in Philadelphia. After World War II however, conglomerate Hoffman took over and moved it to New York with his belief that New York is the center for American culture.

Clayton-Hoffman in New York is far from the image people think of when imagining an American university of a beautiful campus and old buildings. CH School of Music is a 21-floor luxury building in the middle of New Jersey.

If it were not for the two piano statues decorating the building entrance, people would think that it is just a regular office building.

However, there was no damage to Clayton's pursuit of creating only the best music. There were only 240 undergraduates, 70 graduate students, and the student-professor ratio was 5:1. In other words, there were over 60 professors.

Anyone who wanted to could reside in the dormitories renovated like a hotel on the top floors of the building, and there were 5 theaters just for orchestra performances. Beyond that, there were over 10 large and small music halls and studios capable of recording.

With the motto 'Learn as you perform', there were concerts every night in these music halls with professors and students. These were also lessons reflected in the students' grades.

Students majoring in claviers, commanding, and composition could each receive a Steinway grand piano.

The greatest perk was that there is no tuition. They just received a small fee from the students living in the dormitories. Instead, they went through the applicants and only accepted the people who have been called a genius once or twice, so the acceptance ratio exceeded 170:1. It was so difficult that even runner-ups in famous competitions were not guaranteed entry.

It was a place where all of the geniuses of the world were gathered.

Chapter 100

Jun Hyuk was wondering why they were going into a place that looked like an office building instead of a college campus as they walked inside when his eyes widened.

In the building lobby, students were hanging out in an area with thick carpeting and a middle-aged woman wearing a suit greeted the two.

She happily welcomed them and led them to the meeting room for the interview.

“We finally meet.”

“Yes, it’s a pleasure to meet you. My name is Yoon Kwang Hun. You can just call me Yoon.”

“Is this the Mr. Jang?”

“Yes, I’m Jang Jun Hyuk.”

Jun Hyuk awkwardly took the hand that the interviewer held out.

“Alright, then shall we start the interview?”

Three professors sat with gentle smiles and started asking questions while the two tried to calm their nerves. Unless there was a special case, he would be accepted no matter what. There was no need to be so worried.

“First, I’ll tell you something very important. Our university really wants Mr. Jang’s admission to the school, but we will make the final decision with the interview. This means that you may not be accepted.”

“Yes, of course.”

If someone goes against the school’s values, even Mozart would not be admitted. To these people, musical talent was a given and they tried to take into account even the person’s personality.

“First, we went through the music files and essay you sent thoroughly. It seems Mr.

Jang has never attended school. Is that right?"

"Yes, that is the truth."

Why were they mentioning the fact that he did not receive a basic education instead of in music? The first interviewer's negative question stayed on Yoon Kwang Hun's mind.

"In the 2 years that Mr. Yoon cared for Mr. Jang as a custodian, what did you teach him?"

"English and reading music scores. I also made it so that he could freely listen to and play music."

"Can I ask why?"

"It isn't a talent I could do anything about."

Yoon Kwang Hun put emphasis on 'talent'. It is a talent that he is proud of.

"We know that fully well. Pianist Hye Jin Jeon, Sae Won Go, and Maestro Hwang. We saw their letters of recommendation as well. Madam Jeon's letter was especially poignant no matter how many times we read it. It was quite convincing. I am asking why you didn't give him general education."

For a moment, Yoon Kwang Hun could not think of a response. Why had he not thought of sending Jun Hyuk to school? He was surprised, but he remembered that it had been an environment where that was entirely plausible.

"That's because Jang's musical talent was so outstanding. I think I decided that he did not need to do anything outside of music... I could not send a 15 year old boy to an elementary school."

Yoon Kwang Hun's response could be accepted as a difference in the educational system, but the interviewers continued to shake their heads.

"Then how is his reading? How many books has he read until now?"

"Books?"

"Yes. Whether it be novels, historical books, et cetera."

"....."

He could not give an answer. Jun Hyuk learned hangul late and the only text he had read were stories concerning musicians on the internet.

"Hm... Can we understand this to mean that Mr. Jang has the knowledge of an elementary school student?"

They made the judgment that Jun Hyuk did not have knowledge beyond music while Yoon Kwang Hun hesitated.

"I believe that is too severe of a judgment."

"I wonder if it is. I don't think he'll have understanding of a single novel, a science experiment, history or culture... I don't think it would be lacking to say that he does not even have an elementary school level knowledge."

If he were talking about the intellectual level, he would be better than an elementary school student, but he could not deny it when discussing knowledge.

The three interviewers spoke with each other in low voices and made their final decision.

"Our conditions for admission are as follows. He needs to receive separate education in subjects outside of music for 3 hours every day and if he fails in that curriculum, he will be left back. I'm saying that he would not be able to graduate."

"3 hours each day?"

"Yes. If we think that he has reached the average education level of a high school graduate, we will end those classes. This means that he needs to receive a general education and profession musical training at the same time. We believe that if he receives this education, his English will also improve."

Just then, an interviewer who had been quiet added to this as if he had been forgetting something,

"Oh, language is also added. English is a basic, but we plan to teach him Italian, German, or French – one of his choosing. Most of the students in this school are fluent

in at least one European language."

If they made the wrong move, he could end up spending more time in general studies more than in working with music.

"Jang's application says that he would like to major in piano, composition, and commanding, but will he be able to keep up with that amount of work??

"He will be able to handle it."

He did not know about anything else, but Yoon Kwang Hun was confident that he could make it so they could not stop talking if it were about music.

"We admit that Jang's talent is extraordinary, but this school is full of students with amazing talent. Our school holds classes with these talented students as a benchmark. That is how high the standard is. It won't be easy."

Jun Hyuk studied English ardently, but he was not at a level where he could understand the interview perfectly. However, he had fully understood that he would need to dedicate 3 hours everyday to general studies and learn another language.

His hardened face already showed that he did not have the confidence to do this. Of the various schools he had interviewed with, this was the only place with such strong requirements, so he was thinking of the other schools that had said that all he had to do was music.

However, Yoon Kwang Hun felt like he needed to make the decision at this moment. What this school was asking for is neither unreasonable nor deterring. He was actually disappointed in himself for not thinking of paying attention to Jun Hyuk's education outside of music.

"These are the conditions for admission. And now our questions are for Mr. Jang."

The interviewer smiled at a tense Jun Hyuk to make him comfortable as he spoke,

"What is music to you?"

It was easy English, so Jun Hyuk fully understood it and answered without hesitation,

"It is making the sounds of the world that disappear within moments, last forever"

“Making sounds last forever.....”

All of the interviewers mumbled to themselves at Jun Hyuk’s response. Then Jun Hyuk started to speak again,

“Oh, and one more thing. It’s the best way to relay someone’s feelings.”

Jun Hyuk added what he had felt while participating in the audition program.

This professors of this school had already seen plenty in Jun Hyuk’s music. Since they already saw his flash of talent in his piano and scores, they did not need him to go through the audition that all of the other participants needed to pass.

It could be that the interviewer’s question to Jun Hyuk was just out of personal curiosity.

“I see. Hm... When can you start participating in classes?”

It meant that he had been accepted.

“He can start with the fall semester. Jun Hyuk is working on his record in Korea at the moment. It will be released before the fall semester.”

“A record? Oh, we have high expectations. Can I ask for a copy once it’s released?”

“Of course. I’ll send it to you.”

“Thank you. And what do you intend to do for living arrangements? Are you thinking of having a separate residence?”

“No, we would like to go in the dormitories. As you know, he hasn’t had a school life, so he would like to make a lot of friends.

“That is an excellent choice.”

History is made at night and Clayton School of Music is no exception to this.

When hot-blooded youths from all over the world are gathered in one place, there is no reason for them to quietly sleep at night. They party with alcohol and music every night.

In the morning, someone is always lost in thought because they cannot remember the song they played while drunk the night before. This also means that the song was good enough for them to want to remember it. Spending time with these people would give him more opportunities to find such inspiration.

With this, it was decided that Jun Hyuk would become independent in the fall semester.

Chapter 101

Jun Hyuk was silent on the plane ride back to Korea. On top of being alone in America starting in the fall semester, it further added to his nervousness that he would be a student preparing night and day for exams.

“Jun Hyuk, don’t worry too much. The school is trying to teach you, not fail you.”

“Even so. I have to do subjects other than music when I can’t even speak well. Stuff like math and science.”

“All you have to do is be good at one thing.”

“One thing?”

“Yeah. If you don’t know something, keep asking with a straight face. That’s all you have to do.”

Yoon Kwang Hun gave Jun Hyuk confidence while thinking of when he started his own study abroad.

He had heard that his English was good in Korea, but he was shocked on the first day of classes.

He could not understand a single thing the professors and students were saying with certainty. By connecting the few words he caught on to, he could barely follow along with the lesson. When the students raised their hands for a chance to answer the professors’ questions, Yoon Kwang Hun could not raise his hand once.

He was even suspected of having a speech impairment for one semester.

Change comes in a moment however. From the day he raised his hand to a question that he understood and gave a satisfactory answer, he gained confidence and quickly got used to the English language.

Jun Hyuk’s English now was better than Yoon Kwang Hun’s was when he first went to America. His vocabulary was limited, but that came with time. The remaining issue

was to make it so Jun Hyuk was not ashamed of his English.



When they finished working on Jun Hyuk's record, everyone who participated in the album gathered and listened to all 10 songs through the best audio system. Then they listened to it again as the MP3 files they would be released as and everyone was full of regret.

The shortened record did not reflect all of the hard work and care they had put into it.

“.....So we were thinking about releasing the record first and then circulating the tracks after about 2 months, but wanted to hear everyone’s opinions.”

This showed that they had given up on making money from this album. Jo Hyung Joong and Yoon Jung Su had determined not to lose the album’s value. It also stemmed from their confidence that the listener would be able to derive value from the album by listening to all of the tracks unlike selling a single track.

Jun Hyuk liked the completed album. The lyrics Yoon Jung Su wrote especially spoke to him. It was as if he had seen the details of his life and had melted it well into the entire album. He was even more satisfied because the gratefulness he felt towards Yoon Kwang Hun he had been too shy to express had been inserted everywhere.

The album jacket was just a panorama of the cafe that Jun Hyuk lived in for 2 years and the three characters, Jang Jun Hyuk. They started pre-orders for the album as the hot summer began and they had not expected many sales, but it exceeded 60,000 albums. At this rate, they could have the unexpected results of 150,000 sales after the official release.

“Of course our country’s driving force for albums sales is in fandoms.”

“I’ll say. I thought it’d be a success even if there were 10,000 pre-order sales... I guess Jun Hyuk still had fans.”

“Now as Jun Hyuk gains success abroad, this record’s value will go up?”

“Yes. We’ll have to count on that day to come.”

Jo Hyung Joong and Yoon Jung Su were encouraged by the unexpected sales and were relishing in the concert proposals that various promotion agencies presented to them.

“A concert would be too much, right?”

“It’s impossible. Even if we started preparing for the concert now, it would only be possible in October but Jun Hyuk is leaving in August.”

“Will the tickets sell if we leave the guitar and piano to someone else?”

“It would be asking for too much. Who would come to a concert without the protagonist.”

“What a waste. There’s nothing as good as a concert to promote an album.”

“We’ll have to wait. If Jun Hyuk decides to come back to Korea for winter break, we can scope the situation and try then.”

Yoon Jung Su spoke with a slight hope, but his expression was not bright. He could not hide the feeling that once Jun Hyuk left Korea, he would not return.

At the end of July, Jun Hyuk’s album was officially released.

In the midst of idol singers’ light single hook songs critics had come across a concept album for the first time in a while and were busy praising it just on the basis of its musical attempt. Yoon Jung Su heated the promotions by saying that it would be among the best of his musical life on entertainment programs.

Jun Hyuk’s album packaging was not flashy like those of idol singers. It did not have the commonly seen photo albums and all it contained was a thin booklet with the lyrics.

The publisher identified the buyers as Jun Hyuk’s adoring fans. Fans consider the presence of collection value more important than the music or price.

The publisher had suggested configuring a package with a photo album, cellphone accessory, and diary with a high price, but Jo Hyung Joong and Yoon Jung Su had turned all of it down saying that the music was all.

Early on the morning of the album release, Yoon Kwang Hun got in his car and headed

to Seoul. He stopped by a large bookstore in Gangnam and picked up Jun Hyuk's album from the display in the music shop and went to the parking lot as soon as he paid for it.

Once inside the car, he took the plastic wrapper off, inserted the CD, and turned up the speakers to listen to the music.

After the quiet guitar accompaniment started, Jang Na Rae's bright voice began to fill the car. Jun Hyuk had never spoken about the songs or lyrics. With anticipation for what the lyrics meant, he flipped the cover of the booklet.

However, Yoon Kwang Hun did not think of reading the lyrics. The short line written on the back of the cover was more beautiful than any lyric.

To my father.

The car was full of Yoon Kwang Hun's dry sobbing rather than Jang Na Rae's song.

Chapter 102

In the last week of August, Jun Hyuk and Yoon Kwang Hun got on a plane back to New York.

This would be Jun Hyuk's second trip to America, but his ticket was not round-trip this time. Now, all he had before him was the road forward.

He arrived at school with 2 trunks and a hard case with 3 guitars. Yoon Kwang Hun brought all of the luggage to Jun Hyuk's room and looked around. A room with a Steinway grand piano which was impossible even in one's dreams. A fully equipped bathroom in each room as if it were a hotel.

The facilities were great enough to have him lost in admiration, but he did not feel comfortable. Jun Hyuk was only 18 now... Other kids were at an age where they ate the breakfast their mothers prepared and complained to their parents, but he would have to figure everything out on his own.

There was a different emotion from when they had come the last time to interview. Yoon Kwang Hun even thought that he should fold his life in Korea and sell coffee in New York to live with Jun Hyuk.

He organized his thoughts however. It would just be 4 years. New York was just Jun Hyuk's ground for 4 years. After that, he would live as famous musicians do.

The life of a musician, living in hotels for more than 200 days out of the year, performing all over the world, composing records, and then finding a city he liked to live in for about a year while writing music. He had no doubt that the world would soon become the grounds for Jun Hyuk's life. Then, he was resolved to guarding his place in Korea.

He waited a moment while Jun Hyuk organized his luggage. Yoon Kwang Hun wanted to meet Jun Hyuk's roommate. He prayed that he would not be a delinquent who smoked marijuana and liked alcohol and girls, but he could not even check because the roommate never showed up.

"Then I'll be going. Study hard. If something happens, don't hesitate and call me right

away. Got it?"

"Yes. Don't worry too much."

"Call me at least once a week. Or else I'm going to come here looking for you."

"What? You're doing that because you'll miss me, right?"

"Are you crazy? The plane tickets are too expensive."

Yoon Kwang Hun looked at Jun Hyuk for a moment and got up from his chair.

"Have a fun time and make a lot of friends. They're all good at what they do, so don't underestimate them."

"Alright."

Jun Hyuk could not lift his head.

"You're dead if you start crying embarrassingly when I leave this room."

"Oy, you worry about yourself. All the kids are going to see it."

Yoon Kwang Hun relaxed when he saw Jun Hyuk lift his head and smile brightly.

"You play too much. I'm going."

Yoon Kwang Hun quickly left the room so his teary eyes would not be detected. After he left, Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano and played Marlowe's Symphony No. 5, Yoon Kwang Hun's favorite, so that he could hear it until he reached the elevator at the end of the hall.



Jun Hyuk finished organizing his luggage and took care of each of the formalities the school instructed him to, leaving his course selection for last. However he thought about it, the special class was a burden.

'Well... since I don't want to become a pianist.'

Eventually, Jun Hyuk only chose classes that corresponded with composition and commanding. An average of 4 hours of classes per day. With the special class, it was 7 hours. He also needed to add the time that went into playing with the performance team.

‘I might as well be a senior in high school, not a college student.’

He made a lap around the school building and scoped out the locations of the structure including the main office and cafeteria. When he came back to his dorm room, an unfamiliar boy had organized his things and was looking at Jun Hyuk.

‘So that’s the roommate?’

He had hoped for an Asian roommate if possible. It would be more comfortable to both communicate in broken English. However, a complete Caucasian approached Jun Hyuk while smiling

“Konnichiwa. Hajimemashite. Anatawa Jang Jun Hyuk desuka?”

‘What is this guy saying? Is he an anime freak?’

This was Jun Hyuk’s first impression of his roommate. He was clearly Caucasian with a white face and wine-tinted curly hair. But he was speaking in Japanese. Jun Hyuk did not know how to speak Japanese, but he could tell that it was Japanese.

If a white person can speak Japanese fluently, he either lived in Japan or was completely enwrapped in Japanese culture.

The roommate noticed that he had made a mistake from the surprised look on Jun Hyuk’s face and quickly started speaking in English,

“Oh, Sorry. You’re probably not Japanese. I’m Daniel Laferriere from Montreal, Canada. Call me Danny.”

This time, he was speaking English fluently. Jun Hyuk lost his surprise and became natural,

“Hi.”

He needed to say more but what could he say? Jun Hyuk just thought of different words

in his head, but did not say any of them.

"Uh? Is that all?"

"Ah. Call me Jang. I'm from Korea."

"Oh, Jang. Korea. Okay. See you."

Danny from Canada shook Jun Hyuk's hand lightly and left the room. Jun Hyuk was crestfallen that his conversation with his roommate had ended so simply.

He could have done much better with the English he had learned until now, but it was not easy to speak. His mouth was already drying. Will he be able to adjust in a world that only speaks English?



Jun Hyuk wandered the area around the school for a few days, activated a cellphone, identified locations of places he needed like the music stores and Korean restaurants, and prepared for school to start.

In the meantime, he never saw his roommate, Danny. There was no doubt that he was going around New York City to have fun since he said that he had come from Canada.

Jun Hyuk could not pay attention to how the first day of classes went. He could not find a professor who spoke English normally. English with a French accent. English with an Italian accent. There was even a bearded professor who may have been Arab or Indian, who Jun Hyuk was sure was speaking Indian and not English.

The problem was that this Indian professor was the professor of composition. Jun Hyuk needed to listen to this professor's class for 3 hours every week.

This musician, Rajkumar Hirani, was not an exceptional composer, but he was a top theoretician who systematically organized various ethnic music of India. After researching nearly 2,000 tremendous structures of India, he studied western music in London.

This scholar was often called a library because he had almost all theories regarding music saved in his head.

When the music lectures were over, Jun Hyuk ran to the seminar room next to the library alone. A grey-haired middle-aged woman and blonde man in his thirties took turns teaching Jun Hyuk. A specific subject had not been determined. The middle-aged woman did math and science while the man in his thirties handled subjects like literature, humanities, and history. They taught him as though they were just telling him stories.

On the first day, the word that the middle-aged woman said most and that he even heard in his sleep was 'number'.

She taught him number theories like natural numbers, integers and rational numbers, but all Jun Hyuk remembered was 'number'.

Jun Hyuk's roommate Danny did not come in for the 3 days after school started. On the fourth day when Jun Hyuk went back to his dorm room after classes ended, he heard the sound of girls laughing and violin coming from inside his room.

He checked the room number and it was definitely his room. Jun Hyuk hesitated in front of the door for a while. Movie scenes of American college dorms passed through his head. If he opened the door and went in, he might see something he should not. After properly hearing a 1-minute long violin sound, he became angry. It was his music.

"This jerk!"

He opened the door and went in.

Two girls were hanging out on Jun Hyuk's bed and Danny was playing the violin. Danny's bed was also occupied by two girls. Fortunately, he did not see anything he should not have because they were all properly clothed.

Jun Hyuk went to Danny and took the violin he was playing. He thought of smashing it, but stopped when he had the thought that it might be extremely expensive. Instead, he yelled at the girls,

"Get out!"

The girls laughing in the room stopped. Jun Hyuk had yelled in Korean.

"I'll say it again. Get out. I said. Get out!"

Chapter 103

Danny went to Jun Hyuk who was huffing and took the violin back.

“Hey, what’s wrong? Calm down.”

“This asshole. I’ll talk to you later.”

He was in such a rush that he kept speaking in Korean. Danny could not understand Korean and could not figure out why Jun Hyuk had slammed the door open and gotten angry.

When Jun Hyuk kept glaring at the girls, Danny gave them a look. They left the room cursing.

“You saw my score?”

“Ah, yeah. Is that why you’re mad? Because I looked at it without your permission? No, don’t get me wrong. I just saw it because it was on your desk. I didn’t go through your stuff.”

“You...”

Jun Hyuk could not remember how to say ‘asshole’ in English. Thanks to this, Danny did not get cursed out.

Jun Hyuk took a deep breath and started speaking,

“It’s okay if you see my score. You just can’t be the first to see it. The person who can see my score first is in Korea. You can be the second to see it. Okay? And... it’s also okay for you to play my song. You’re just dead if you play it wrong.”

Jun Hyuk motioned his right fist at Danny. It was body language that could be understood all over the world.

“Hey, I played it wrong? What are you talking about? You think I can’t play something like that precisely?”

It was just a 3-minute song. Danny had the talent to imprint a score like that in his memory after reading through it once. It did not make sense that Jun Hyuk was saying he got it wrong.

Jun Hyuk looked at Danny for a moment, opened the cover of the grand piano and put his hands on the keys. Then he looked at Danny as he spoke,

“This is what you played.”

Jun Hyuk started playing the piano.

“Here... here... here... Now do you get it? You got it wrong in 3 places.”

Just then, Jun Hyuk remembered a word and he used it accurately,

“Asshole!”

However, Danny did not hear Jun Hyuk call him an asshole. He was surprised that Jun Hyuk had been able to pinpoint his mistakes while listening from the other side of the door, and he still could not figure out why he had made the mistakes. Jun Hyuk had showed him what he had gotten wrong on the piano just now, but he had not told him.

Danny brought Jun Hyuk’s piano to his memory, but he could not figure it out no matter how many times he thought about what Jun Hyuk pointed out. What did he mean he had gotten wrong?

Now that Jun Hyuk had calmed down a bit, he needed to get ready for his special class. Danny carefully spoke from behind Jun Hyuk. He was using easy English to get Jun Hyuk to speak.

“But... What’s the title of the song? There isn’t one?”

“There is. Number.”

“Number?”

“Yeah. It’s too complex.”

Once Danny saw that Jun Hyuk’s tone had subsided, he asked what he was really curious about,

“Are you going to tell me what I got wrong? My performance was perfect.”

Jun Hyuk looked at Danny who kept saying that he had not made a mistake and spoke again. He even succeeded in applying the word perfectly,

“Stupid asshole.”

Jun Hyuk only said these words and left the room with 2 books. Today, he was to have a debate on literature.

When he returned to his room after finishing classes, Danny was waiting for him with a stiff face. It seemed he was going to stay in the dormitories today.

Jun Hyuk thought that he might be waiting for him out of anger because he had cursed at him before going to class. After Danny sat Jun Hyuk down on his bed however, he picked up his violin and started playing it carefully.

Danny spoke once the 3-minute performance was over,

“What do you think? Is there something still wrong with it?”

“No.”

“How did you know?”

“What?”

“Where I got it wrong before.”

Is this guy an idiot? Though he seems to be a pretty extraordinary violin player.

“I wrote the song. Of course I know.”

Danny did not have anything to say to Jun Hyuk’s simple answer. He was right. It was a given that the person who wrote the songs would know. He wanted to ask more specifically but gave up. He remembered that this skinny, tall kid from Korea was not used to speaking in English.

The short 3-minute song, ‘Number’ that Jun Hyuk wrote was very good. It was so good that even by glancing at a score that had been thrown on the desk, Danny had wanted

to try playing it. Danny spoke to Jun Hyuk carefully,

"I heard you're majoring in composition and command? I'm in violin."

Jun Hyuk thought that his roommate might be a little vapid. He had just shown him an amazing violin performance, but to think that he would not know that he is majoring in violin?

"I heard the rumors. They say there's a genius from Korea. So great that the school even offered special studies."

Danny wanted to compliment Jun Hyuk on 'Number' and wanted to become closer to Jun Hyuk who had written it.

"I heard that he didn't even need to go through the admission auditions and was accepted on a few music files and compositions alone, but I didn't know that would be you..."

Since people applied from all over the world to famous schools of music, it was normal for foreigners to send in videos of their auditions.

Clayton however, held a tradition of requiring an audition in person in front of the interviewers no matter what. This was due to Hoffman's own stance that applicants needed to experience and overcome the pressure that an audition provided.

The only exception to this tradition was Jun Hyuk.

'What is this idiot talking about?'

Danny chattered for a while, but Jun Hyuk could not understand him very well. He was not used to Danny's accent either because he was French Canadian.

Since he was 8 years old, a rumor that he was a violin prodigy had spread in his neighborhood, and at 11, he came in 1st place in the junior section of the Montreal Competition. Danny, the 19 year old genius violinist who could speak English, French, Japanese, and Spanish fluently, was being treated like an idiot by Jun Hyuk.



The music classes were more of a mess than Jun Hyuk thought they would be. Jun Hyuk had taken Yoon Kwang Hun's words stressing the importance of learning theory to heart, and had come to this school. But even after attending a few classes, he had not learned any theories.

The professors of this school did not mention any composition theories. They mainly pulled music apart and put it back together using words like freedom, the destruction of form, essence, and innovation. He recorded his lectures because he could not understand them well, and Danny often listened to them and explained them to him in easier English.

The professors assumed that the students already knew compositional techniques like counterpoint, harmony structure, and fuga, and did not explain them. It could be that Danny taught Jun Hyuk more of the theories that he wanted to learn.

Classes often set a theme song and had the students imagined or speculated why it needed a certain harmony structure.

"Jun, why do you think Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 was created as a homophonic (harmony progressing with just one melody)? And why do you think there is another development in front of the exposition in the 1st part?"

At first, everyone called him Jang. But when they realized that Jang was his last name, they began to call him Jun which was easier to pronounce.

"Excuse me? Homo what?"

"Homophonic."

"What does homophonic mean?"

For a moment, the classroom was full of laughter. As there were not even 10 students in a class, there was no way for him to avoid the professor's questions. Classes were conducted so that teachers and students, and students and students exchanged questions and opinions.

The most annoying aspect of studying abroad for students who attended ordinary

schools in Korea was this teaching method. It took a lot of time to get used to this format of endless questions and debate.

The fortunate thing was that Jun Hyuk had not attended an ordinary school. He did not find a lecture format of exchanging ideas awkward, and accepted it as natural.

He was also keeping in mind the method Yoon Kwang Hun told him. If he did not know something, he needed to keep a straight face and ask until he did know.

“Homophonic means progressing with a harmony with just one melody.”

Furthermore, he liked that no matter how basic his questions were and the students laughed, the professor did not laugh and answered them.

Jun Hyuk cocked his head. Why was he asking such a useless question? Is there not just one answer to it?

“I’m sure Beethoven thought of a melody... and that was the best way to express that melody.”

The professor continued with the debate even with Jun Hyuk’s pointless answer,

“Could there have been a better method? Is there evidence that there was no better way to express it?”

“I don’t think there’s a better way to express it no matter how much I listen to Beethoven’s piano.”

The students laughed again. They could not keep the debate going in this way. By saying that he thought about it and there is no better method, he might as well have said that he had gone inside Beethoven’s head. He was just being stubborn.

Professor Hirani still did not laugh.

“Hm. Alright. Then how many methods have you thought of that you’re saying you don’t think there is a better way?”

“Um... 100?”

As soon as Jun Hyuk said 100, the laughter disappeared and silence swept over the

classroom. Professor Hirani's eyes widened and was speechless.

Chapter 104

Is there a musician who thought of 100 different ways to try to better express Beethoven's song? When it is Beethoven?

"Jun, can you tell us what methods you've thought of?"

Professor Hirani looked at Jun Hyuk with eyes full of curiosity and everyone in the classroom directed their attention to his mouth. What kind of response would he give this time? They were now full of anticipation because he kept giving unexpected answers.

"It's a bit difficult to respond in words. English is hard and I don't know the terms... It's even hard to explain."

Jun Hyuk suddenly stood up and walked toward the piano sitting in the classroom.

"I'll try to play it instead."

Jun Hyuk began to play the piano as he added a brief explanation for each rendition.

"This is the exposition when there isn't a development."

"This is with multiple melodies instead of one."

"I don't know the terms for this one. I'll just play it."

Dozens of arrangements of Beethoven's sonata flowed from Jun Hyuk's fingertips. After focusing on performing for a while, Jun Hyuk stood up from the chair.

"What do you think? Isn't Beethoven's original the best?"

That was when several students began to whisper to each other. The rumor that there was a genius from Korea. They had figured out who the object of those rumors was.

It was a great adventure to arrange classics. It was normal to hear that it was a desecration to the original.

That was why legendary Leonard Bernstein of the New York Philharmonic defined classic as such: ‘Classic does not mean that it is an old song, but a song that is played strictly following the composer’s score.’

All that was done was arranging a violin song to the piano or an opera to a piano song. It was also okay to change a symphony into a piano song because it was a way to listen to the complete song, however inferior.

But to arrange a piano song into another piano song? With Beethoven? Everyone would agree that was crazy and unimaginable. However, this young Asian kid confidently played different versions of Beethoven’s piano sonata in the middle of class. On top of that, it was with the reason that he had thought of different methods of expression.

More surprising was that Jun Hyuk’s versions were so good that they did not insult Beethoven.

From this day on, Jun Hyuk brushed off his awkwardness and fear regarding classes and lectures. He aggressively asked the professor questions and actively participated in debates. Once he started discussing his thoughts on music, he did not know how to stop so he was prone to flying through class time while chatting.

Eventually, Professor Hirani had to arrange for time to speak with Jun Hyuk separately after class to reduce the time spent on basic questions.

Lectures only lasted for 4 hours a day and the professors and students formed teams with the remainder of the time. The school’s specialty was performing without time restraints.

Jun Hyuk needed to become a team member because of the school’s tradition for students to perform as they learn. The music teams were not what people think of as regular clubs. They had to practice in concert as if they are professionals and were evaluated in a monthly recital.

More than 25% of American orchestra members were alumni of Clayton because the students performed under this real-life pressure for 4 years.



Danny took Jun Hyuk by the hand and dragged him to the practice room.

"Jun, I'm in a quartet and the other members keep pestering me because they want to try performing with you. You don't have a team yet, right?"

There were 3 students waiting for Jun Hyuk in the practice room. 1st and 2nd violin. Viola. Cello. If a piano was added to this string quartet, they would become a piano quintet.

"I have my special classes. You know it'll be hard to match practice times, right? If you're okay with that, then I'm just grateful to be on a team."

"We already decided to make the times work no matter what. Then you're on our team from now on."

All of the members welcomed Jun Hyuk and while he shook each person's hand, Coline Svatos on the cello even flashed a large smile and squeezed his hand tightly.

"Alright then. Shouldn't we test to see if an exquisite ensemble comes out now that we have a new member?"

Everyone cheered to Coline's words and dragged Jun Hyuk out. He had high expectations because they said it was a harmony, but their first undertaking was alcohol, not music. They made a round through a shabby pub, bar and even a strip club before going back to the dorms, and Jun Hyuk was not able to get up until the afternoon the next day.

When Jun Hyuk finished the 1st real ensemble with his team, his first thought was that he had done well to come study abroad. These kids were armed with talent that was incomparable to the members of Hwang Suk Min's Fine Philharmonic.

There was no need for Jun Hyuk to match the others' levels because they had all been called geniuses in their respective motherlands. When Jun Hyuk's piano exploded occasionally, everyone did get surprised, but they were prepared to follow along with whatever it took and they all looked to enjoy it even if it was difficult. They were beasts who yelled 'Try again!' if it were not the best performance.

Being surrounded by people who were not satisfied with themselves, he realized what Yoon Kwang Hun had really meant.

His frustration disappeared and he learned of a synergy that rises when flashes of talent come together. Danny was a far more extraordinary violinist than Jun Hyuk had expected, and there would be no problem for 3rd year Coline to go on stage as a cello soloist.

Rather than practicing existing string quartet songs, they accepted Jun Hyuk's self-composed songs without hesitation. When they participated in arranging the songs, they offered so many new ideas that Jun Hyuk was often surprised.

Performing with these students grew more and more fun everyday over his lectures and special classes. They had gained so much interest in the school that when Jun Hyuk's piano quintet went on stage, there was not a single empty seat in the audience.

The professors who always watched new attempts with joy became engrossed in Jun Hyuk's arrangements.

Piano major Professor Randall Poster in particular could not understand why Jun Hyuk had not chosen to listen to the piano lectures. The piano did not stand out in Jun Hyuk's quintet, but it was undoubtedly a pillar of the team. It presented the most stable performance.

He had been happy beyond expression after hearing the piano performance during the application period because he had met an outstanding pianist. After fighting with Professor Lenny Greenfield over taking him in, he had become in charge but Jun Hyuk himself rejected piano lessons.

He had personally gone to meet Jun Hyuk several times to convince him to take lessons to go out for a competition, but Jun Hyuk just said that he was not interested in going out for competitions. The biannual Long Thibaud Competition was impossible because it opened in November this year. However, Professor Poster was still aiming for the next competition because he thought that Jun Hyuk would be ready enough if he prepared for 2 years.

Chapter 105

Coline, the cellist in the quintet, listened to a Korean song he could not understand for a while on his phone and whistled.

“Danny, this is Jun Hyuk’s album?”

Danny went to Coline, who was yelling with the earphones in, took them out and spoke,

“Yeah. His first album. He said it was released in Korea. I guess he made it right before he came here.”

“Composition, guitar, piano..... That’s fucking great!”

Coline was impressed by Jun Hyuk’s guitar and started motioning his fingers in the air as if playing one.

“Jun’s guitar is really.....”

“Killer, right? And what about the configuration of the tracks?”

Danny suddenly remembered something and turned on his laptop.

“Take a look at this too. I’m pretty sure you haven’t seen it yet.”

Danny showed him Jun Hyuk’s versions of Canon that were up on YouTube. Coline’s jaw dropped at the image of Jun Hyuk playing the drums as well.

“He’s really a monster. Not just the piano and composition, but the guitar and drums too?”

“More than that, take a close look at that guitar. You know what that is?”

“Hang on. That... Isn’t that a custom PRS (Paul Reed Smith) and a James Tyler Buring Water?”

“Right. It’s under Jun Hyuk’s bed.”

As soon as Danny spoke, Coline ducked under Jun Hyuk’s bed and pulled out the guitar case. However, it was locked with a passcode and he was unable to see it.

“Danny, was Jun Hyuk rich in Korea?”

“No. I think he went out on some pop music program in Korea. He said he made a lot of money when the songs he arranged became really popular. And I think I heard something about him modeling.”

“Phew – So he was a star in Korea.”

“That’s why he even released an album.”

Coline’s eyes sparked as he spoke to Danny,

“Danny, do you know what time Jun Hyuk’s classes end today?”

“9 o’clock? Or around 9:30? He’ll be coming back soon. Why?”

“Nothing. I just need to ask him something.”

Coline wanted to confess a secret he had been keeping to Jun Hyuk.

After a never ending 4 hour class on the history of African American human rights, Jun Hyuk came back to the dorms exhausted. It was a frustrating lecture that he had not been able to understand half of because the professor spoke more than he normally did.

Jun Hyuk had been expecting to lay down in his bed comfortably, but Coline who had been waiting for him took him by the hand and dragged him out to a bar in front of the school.

“I don’t know what you want to talk about, but hurry up. I’m really tired today.”

“Alright, I’ll get straight to the point. Do you want to join our band? Let’s do it together.”

“What? Band?”

"Yeah. I made a band with 2 friends. It's been almost a year."

"Friends? At our school?"

"No. They only know the names Beethoven and Mozart in terms of classical. But they're amazing."

There are a lot of people who are difficult to understand in the world. Is it not the CH School of Music where everyone wants to go but cannot?

Not only was he dreaming of doing other music after getting over such a difficult obstacle, but he had even created a band to do something else.

"Then what about classical? Wasn't it your dream to become a cellist?"

"Classical? What's so great about music that's hashed up and replayed over and over again?"

Coline took a swig of his beer and spoke mockingly.

"Hashed? Replayed?"

"Don't you think so? Beethoven's symphony 'Fate' alone has been recorded in 700 albums. No matter how much of an oldie it is, it's just one song. It's one song with different conductors. No, I'm pretty sure Karajan of the Berlin Philharmonic did it around 20 times. It has to be more because he released the box set of Beethoven's complete works 5 times."

Herbert von Karajan who especially loved Beethoven. He sold 200 million records while he served on the Berlin Philharmonic. Though there was a lot of talk about how he just performed songs that the public was used to and about it all being showmanship, it was true that he led the popularization of classical music.

"Past baroque, classical, and romantic, do you think classical would have developed? The so-called contemporary music is saying that it is following behind classical, but even that is barely staying alive with Stravinsky, Bartok Schoenberg, and Rigoletti."

Coline's honest thoughts on classical music exploded and flowed out.

"If you release something as contemporary music now, the premiere is the last

performance. It's only performed once. And for a rookie, that's only if it's good enough to get 1st place at the Belgium's Queen Elisabeth Competition."

Classical is already falling in its own league because it is worshipping its existing works while keep new trials at a distance.

"Can you understand this screwed up situation? Either rehash relics or make music that no one will listen to even if the critics praise it. These are the only 2 paths in classical."

Whether it was due to his drunkenness or discontent and dissatisfaction concerning classical, Coline's voice grew louder and louder.

"Composers were revered a long time ago, but not anymore. No one will listen even if you make contemporary music. If you want fame and wealth... Composition? You have to give it up and become a performer. Conductor? That's also okay since a conductor of an orchestra is a performer."

It was advice with the fact that Jun Hyuk's majors are composition and command in mind. In Coline's thoughts however, Jun Hyuk still has a naive view.

"Then instead of making abstruse contemporary music, you can make songs that are like the old classical."

"Ha ha ha. You're really impressive. You're saying we should go back to the past? Do you have the confidence to do that? Fine. Then let's say you wrote a song. You know who your competition is? You have to compete with people like Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin, and Wagner. No. You'll only be recognized if you write songs that are better than theirs. Or they'll say you're just a monkey copying them."

Jun Hyuk did not think that everything Coline was saying was gibberish. However, he thought that Coline would also know that good music comes to light and is loved by the public. It is just that right now, they are taking down the negative aspects of classical music.

"So you made a rock and roll band?"

"Why? What's wrong with that? It's popular music. Classical was popular music of its time. Mozart's Don Giovanni had a lot of success in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. It was the song that the citizens enjoyed in the theater. To compare it with

something now, it would be like a box-office success musical or a U2 concert.”

It seems Coline wants the masses to cheer for his music. But as a cellist, he would not be able to get past the restrictions of classical fanciers. This kind of thought could be the reason why they created the band. It is the greatest difference between them and Jun Hyuk, who only thinks about music.

“Jun, just think about it. If Mozart came to the present on a time machine, do you think he would do rock or jazz? Or do you think he would do classical?”

“I don’t know.”

“I’m 100% sure. There are a lot of people who like Mozart, like to have fun, enjoy grand things, crave success, and desire people’s cheering. I’m sure Mozart would have put a rock band together and toured the world. Money, fame, women, popularity, alcohol, drugs. These are all trademarks of rockers.”

Jun Hyuk even thought that Coline’s plausible speculations were fun. Mozart as the leader of a rock band.....

“Mozart died at 36, but he would have died at 26 in the present. Of overdosing on drugs. Ha ha ha.”

Coline broke out in laughter and asked Jun Hyuk again,

“Hey Jun, I heard the music you made in Korea. You like rock and roll too, and you like jazz and the blues. Let’s do the band together. I won’t ask you to miss classes or quintet practices, so let’s do it together when you have time.”

Jun Hyuk’s blood also boiled. He wanted to do it. He wanted to play a deafening guitar capable of exploding an amp and he wanted to play the drums so hard the ceiling came down.

However, classical is what really made his blood boil. The exhilarating bliss. He does not have to choose between the two, but now is the time to focus. He does not want to make the 4 years he had decided on with such difficulty to go to waste by doing something useless.

“I can’t. You know too that I get special classes for 2 hours every day. I don’t have time.”

Chapter 106

Jun Hyuk remembered something he had been forgetting,

“Oh right. Didn’t you say that your band has 3 people? You still don’t have enough people when it’s been almost a year?”

“Oh, no. Guitar, drum, bass. I’m the bass. I do guitar and vocals as well.”

“Then it’s all full. Why are you asking me when you have everything – guitar, bass, drums, vocals?”

“We don’t have a keyboardist. I’m a major in classical too. I need the grandiosity that comes from a keyboardist instead of a simple configuration.”

“Hey! You should have said that earlier. Then I don’t have any interest. I play the piano so much in the quintet but to play the keyboard in the band? Forget it.”

Jun Hyuk found the perfect excuse to refuse the offer. He was not just turning Coline down, but also his own self who wanted to be in the band.

“Hey! Don’t just say you don’t want to do it and talk after you listen to our music.”

“What famous band’s songs do you guys normally practice?”

“Are you crazy? You think we’re doing the band for fun right now? Our goal is to release a record. We’re professionals.”

Coline was miffed at Jun Hyuk who thought that he would just be copying others’ songs.

“I see. But is it easy to release a record?”

“Other than the marketing, what’s so hard? Do you know how many recording studios there are in New York? If we don’t record by instrument and track and record all together, we could finish it in a day. \$500 is enough.”

Nirvana's 'Nevermind' was produced in Detroit's Sound City studio for \$600. With that, they sold 16 million copies.

Because of this legend, there are still amateur musicians who try to record their music in small studios. And they are in a better environment than Nirvana was. They have Apple.

"We'll sell the track on the Apple store first and if it becomes a hit, producers are going to come to us. Then it's all over."

The smiling Coline looked like he was dreaming that he had already become a star.

"Jun, you really won't do it with us?"

"Sorry, I'm not interested. It's hard even keeping up with my assignments."

He had thought that all he would have to do at a university of music was write songs and perform. However, more than half of the assignments asked him to write his thoughts on various topics that were thrown at him."

"Then Jun, let me hear you play the guitar once. And the drums."

"Let's do it next time. I'm really tired right now. You're banned from my room if you keep bothering me."

Coline who had already heard Jun Hyuk's album did not give up. It was okay even if he did not come in as a keyboardist. What the band needed most were the skills Jun Hyuk showed in the quintet with his talent in arranging and directing while correcting each member's music.

With this, there was one more person following Jun Hyuk around.



Something caught Jun Hyuk's attention at once, more than the two people following him around. The harmonica.

Jun Hyuk was running to make it on time to his special class when the sound of a harmonica stopped him in his tracks. To think that he was hearing Bachs' Cantata

played on a harmonica. He had only heard the harmonica played in folk or country music.

When he looked toward the sound of the harmonica, he saw the back of someone sitting comfortably with her legs propped up on a chair in front of the cafeteria. Jun Hyuk waited where he stood until she was done playing.

In the middle of his performance, Jun Hyuk's heart started beating when the part with the mashup of two cantatas came up.

The performance became more and more bold. It gradually increased from two cantatas to three, four, and five. The end had such a complicated configuration that it seemed the five cantatas were used randomly, and he thought it was as though classical music had been reconstructed as avant-garde music.

To bring out this kind of configuration with a harmonica. Jun Hyuk could not hold back his curiosity of who was playing the harmonica in such a way that he had not imagined before.

The person who had played the harmonica lit the cigarette laying on the table.

Jun Hyuk approached her carefully and slightly tapped her on the shoulder.

“Excuse me, but can I ask you a question?”

He could be sure that the performer who turned around was a bold beauty from South America. Her dark skin and swinging black hair showed that she is from a hot country.

The girl looked at Jun Hyuk.

“The song you just played... How did you come to think of something like that?”

“How?”

The South American girl looked at him. She had not understood Jun Hyuk's question. Jun Hyuk repeated his question again slowly.

“I'm curious as to how you thought of configuring that kind of music.”

“I just did. It just came to my mind while I was playing the harmonica.”

If he had not interpreted ‘just’ incorrectly, it meant she had thought of it on the spot. Jun Hyuk thought about how he had said the same thing hundreds of times. The others’ expressions at his words. That must be his expression right now.

“I see. I asked something useless. Sorry.”

The South American made Jun Hyuk stop as he was walking away,

“Wait. Are you Jun by chance?”

“I am. You know me?”

“An unbelievable genius from Asia. Skinny and tall. I could tell just by looking at you.”

A curious guy who says something unexpected in every class and is not well-versed in the basic theories but is able to explain everything with music. Though it had not been long since school started, Jun Hyuk had become the subject of such rumors.

“And who are you?”

When Jun Hyuk frowned as he asked, the girl hit her own head.

“Oh right... It was true that our genius isn’t interested in others. Ha ha.”

This South American beauty in her twenties laughed and got up from her chair.

“I’m Amelia. Piano major.”

Jun Hyuk shook the hand Amelia had put out. She stared at Jun Hyuk, but he could not take his eyes off of the harmonica.

Amelia Lamarque is a genius pianist who is already recognized as the 2nd Martha Argerich in Argentina. She had shown this first at the New York Bernstein Music Festival and famous professor and professor Reny Greenfield had recommended her to enroll in the school.

Professor Greenfield was so confident in her talent that he never failed to invite her as a guest pianist for his performances and went around telling people that she would become the queen of concerts.

The ability to capture South America's passion in her piano. She was critically acclaimed because she could use that passion and even show simplicity.

Last year however, she was eliminated in the 2nd round of the Poland Warsaw Chopin Competition and was not included in the final list. There could have been talk that she had not been able to advance because she is not European, but the organizers dismissed these rumors because a Japanese person came in 1st place.

An important fact is that the Japanese person who won spent 10 years in France's Paris School of Music, and that played a large part in the win.

"Amelia, piano, okay."

Jun Hyuk mumbled each word as though he were saving them in his memory.

"I guess you liked the harmonica just now."

Amelia kept making Jun Hyuk stop.

"Yeah. It was a really cool variation. The configuration was really impressive. I'm saying this as a pianist, but try arranging that song on two pianos. I think it'll come out really great. Alright then, I have to get to class."

As Jun Hyuk turned around, Amelia grabbed his wrist.

"Hey. Whew – What do you mean 2 pianos? I'm not a genius like someone. Shouldn't you at least give me a hint for how to configure it?"

Amelia scratched her head.

"What? You performed it yourself."

"Ah, I honestly don't really remember it. Ha ha."

Just as the students of this school saw Jun Hyuk as strange, he also thought they were strange.

Danny who plays the violin so well is an dumb, and Coline who is a member of the quintet is an idiot who wants to become a rock star.

Now this pianist suffers from short-term memory. How could she not remember what she just played?

“Cantata A Major, E Flat Major, Gm. This is for the 1st piano. And the 2nd piano can play D, C, Majors. I’m sure you’ll have to change it a bit since the range of the piano and harmonica are different.”

“Oh!”

Amelia moved her fingers in the air a few times and snapped her fingers.

“Okay. Thanks.”

She put out the cigarette she was holding and ran.

Jun Hyuk’s felt good as he watched her run. There was no need to explain multiple times in this school. Everyone could understand what he meant with few words. They also gave results that were up to and at times beyond his expectations.

Jun Hyuk started running again as well. He was already late because of that forgetful girl. He would get a tardy.

Chapter 107

When Jun Hyuk went back to his dorm room after his 3 hour lesson, there was someone waiting for him in front of the door. Fortunately, it was not Coline.

She was sitting in front of his room while playing the harmonica, not shying from the gazes of other students.

“We finally meet again. Do you have a moment?”

“What? Why?”

Amelia suddenly grabbed his wrist and led him to a practice room with two grand pianos.

“I played it the way you said before, but it’s not that good. Help me out a bit.”

Jun Hyuk threw his bag on the floor and sat in front of one of the pianos,

“Play the first. I’ll play the second.”

“Okay.”

As soon as Jun Hyuk heard Amelia’s first note, music flowed out. An unbending melody. A rampancy that was as though she was taking the soft Bach and shaking him by his hair. She was ignoring the calm expression and playing the piano with power.

Jun Hyuk had heard that this girl had flunked at last year’s Chopin Competition. Her piano clearly showed why. Chopin and this girl do not have chemistry. No matter how well she expressed the delicate Chopin, the judges would only have remembered her passion. It is relayed that powerfully.

He had no doubt that she was learning pianissimo (very weakly) in this school. If she learned to delicately hide her strength, she would become a perfect pianist.

After the 1st piano’s solo flowed for about 3 minutes, Jun Hyuk started playing his piano. In order to keep the cantata theme alive, he came in so slowly that the 1st piano

would not notice. The two cantatas modified exquisitely to sound like a single song, and he focused on completing a harmony.

After playing for over 10 minutes, the song was coming to an end but Jun Hyuk kept playing as if he could be and could not be present.

Amelia pressed down the last notes as if bringing down a hammer and bolted up from her chair in exhilaration. He did not speak a word and without being able to control the excitement she felt in her fingertips, she pulled Jun Hyuk into a hug and kissed him. They kissed so deeply that he could not breathe for a few minutes and he left the room with a flushed face.

Jun Hyuk knew very well that his flushed cheeks were not just a result of the kiss. The indescribable satisfaction that is felt after finishing a wonderful performance – this is the reason. However, Jun Hyuk could not hide his disorientated state. He quietly mumbled behind Amelia who was running out of the room,

“You, good kisser.”

Of the three teams performing that night in the bandstand, one was Amelia’s piano. So as not to forget the excitement she felt while playing the piano with Jun Hyuk, she performed the variation on Bach’s cantata with Professor Greenfield in Jun Hyuk’s place.

Jun Hyuk watched the performance with interest, but he could not hide his bitter smile when it was over.

Professor Greenfield had not been faithful to his supporting role as the second, and had shown a comparable piano. The configuration of his piano was to show the grandiosity of the piece, so Amelia responded with a piano that sounded as though she was trying hard not to be pushed back.

Eventually, the two ended with the pomp that comes from a fiery battle rather than sophistication. Their faces were not very bright either once they finished their performance.

The 2nd team to appear was a string quartet, but they were unable to overcome the powerful finish leftover and ended their mediocre performance without showing their full potential. Jun Hyuk left without listening to the rest.

When he came outside, he could hear a girl's sharp voice. Amelia was speaking strongly to Professor Greenfield.

Anyone would yell in this situation. Professor Greenfield had ruined the performance due to his greed as a pianist. Of course Professor Greenfield would not be able to understand why Amelia was getting so angry and how he had ruined the performance. The song that he performed was not bad either.

However, he would have been able to understand if he had heard the performance of a second piano that stays in the background and supports the first piano. He would know that harmony takes priority over grandiosity.

Jun Hyuk did not know that after this day, Amelia declared that she would no longer participate as a guest in Professor Greenfield's performances.

At the start of November, the many students majoring in the piano and violin were nowhere to be seen. Along with the students competing in the Long Thibaud Competition in France, students and professors had left en masse to visit the country and see the people who would become the fresh performers of the world. Thanks to this, the team performances that occurred every night were suspended for the time being.

Danny had gotten on the plane to France. He was not participating in the competition, but he wanted to see the participants. Jun Hyuk was able to focus on composition while alone in the quiet. Yoon Kwang Hun who was always the first to see Jun Hyuk's new scores praised him saying that his music was becoming more elaborate every time they spoke.

One day when the composition lecture ended, Professor Hirani stopped Jun Hyuk as he was leaving the classroom.

"Jun, are you going to submit a song?"

"Excuse me? What do you mean a song?"

"The song CH orchestra will perform. This year, the principal conductor of Philadelphia will be visit to command."

"Ah, are you talking about the performance in December?"

“That’s right.”

The CH orchestra is an orchestra made from Clayton-Hoffman students. The activity period regardless of grade and relation is 1 year. Students who are talented enough to dream of becoming soloists go through a cutthroat competition to become a member. Everyone desperately tries to become a member because of the performances that open twice every year.

They perform in a midsummer night festival in New York’s Central Park. This performance is opening for the New York Philharmonic.

The winter season performance opens in the theater inside the school.

A conductor who is eminent in America comes to orchestrate both of these performances. If a student stands out, he could earn an amazing opportunity. Furthermore, the opportunity to become a soloist comes if the selected repertoire is an orchestra.

Since the summer performance is in front of a general audience, they perform a widely known song. However, because the winter performance is done inside the school, it is done with a song created by a student.

“Ah, is it also possible for students?”

“Not only is it possible, we only do the performance with a student’s song. You didn’t know?”

“No, I didn’t know the students wrote the songs. I just thought they performed a famous song. When do I need to submit it by?”

“It’s next week. What a waste... The other composition major students will probably be refining their songs right now. I guess you couldn’t tell that the other students were on edge lately. They’re all on the brink of meltdowns. It’s an honor if they’re selected and it’s a disgrace if they aren’t. Ha ha.”

“Really? Should I give it a try?”

“Oh, I guess you have something made?”

Professor Hirani had an expression of anticipation for what Jun Hyuk’s song would be

like.

"I do have something I made but... it's old... Wouldn't it be better to make a new one? I need to use what I learned from you as well."

To start composing now? When there is only one week left? Well, it does not have to be a 40-minute symphony. Since it is a free choice song without a format on the number of parts it needs, it would not matter if it was 10 minutes long.

"Try making a concerto while you're at it. It's better if even one more person is able to participate."

Jun Hyuk suddenly recalled a song at Professor Hirani's words. Then he decided what kind of song he would write.

A piano concerto. Not a song for the Argentinian beauty Amelia's passionate piano, but a song that presses the passion to its limit. What that girl needs to learn. Pianissimo! Jun Hyuk was going to make an extreme pianissimo.

Chapter 108

The deadline to submit the self-composed songs for the winter performance passed and the professors gathered in a spacious conference room to judge the songs.

For a fair evaluation, the professors do not know which students wrote the songs. They have to judge the scores with only the submission numbers written on them and the office as a list of the submission numbers with the names of the corresponding students. Once the judging is over and a song is chosen, they let the professors know who the composer is.

The table in the conference room was covered in envelopes holding scores. The professors open the envelopes and after looking at each score, assign scores. By adding all of the scores, they debate over the song with the most points.

Is it a song that is worthy of having a famous conductor orchestrate it?

If it does not meet that absolute criterion, the system left the repertoire to the conductor.

The professors write affectionate advice on the songs that are not chosen and return them to the students.

Day of judging. There are dozens of scores stacked on the center of the table. However, all of the professors' hands were reaching for one envelope because of its thickness. It is at least three times as thick as the other envelopes.

As their hands bumped, they all laughed.

"Doesn't this look to be at least 30 minutes?"

"Seems to be. Most of these are a little over 10 minutes....."

"Professor Hirani, you should take a look at it first. We'll look at the thin ones."

Professor Hirani nodded to the professors, opened the envelope, and started to look through the score.

After about 10 minutes passed, Professor Hirani bolted up from his chair.

"This... You should take a look at this song first..."

"Excuse me?"

"Look at this one first."

Over 10 professors started passing the score around. A piano concerto configured entirely in 4 parts. The title read Piano Concerto No. 7.

All of the professors looking at the score thought that they were going to go crazy. A song that makes the listener frustrated. The music did not explode refreshingly and was endlessly teasing. The sweet melody did not last until the end, but was continued instead with a gentle flow. This gentle mood did not last either and became cold.

A normal piano concerto has a intense first part, a relaxing lyrical 2nd part, a short tango in the 3rd, and a rondo in the 4th. Rondo is a format where a principal theme with several contrasting themes. The tempo is much faster than the 1st part and the period of the theme is short.

This song on the other hand has an entirely different configuration. It teases them until the 3rd part. When the 3rd part is ending, they are about to get angry. As soon as they enter the 4th part, the melody that had been teasing them starts exploding all at once. As if making up for the 22 minutes they endured the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd parts, the 4th part shows tremendous power for about 11 minutes and lets them feel the greatest catharsis.

The songs that the other students submitted are closer to contemporary music, but this song has a traditional classical feel to it. If someone who did not know listened to it, they would say that they had discovered an unreleased song by Haydn or Brahms.

While the professors repeatedly looked over the score, 2 hours quickly went by.

"There there. Since we can't end today with the evaluation of just one song, let's review the other pieces as well."

They would of course need to look at the other students' submissions, but the professors looked as though their decisions had already been made.

They finished scoring as it dimmed outside. The judges chose the top three scores and went into a debate over the two songs tied 1st place and a song in 3rd place by a 3 point difference.

The judges began discussing the shortcomings of the 3rd place song with its score in the center of the table.

“Isn’t it a bit lacking for an orchestral arrangement?”

“Yes. It would have been better if they had made it more simple... It’s more fitting for a string quartet.”

“Then let’s select a quartet team and open a separate performance with this. And counsel this person on arranging it to fit a quartet.”

“Then it’s time to choose between these two songs.”

At first, they had thought that the piano concerto would place in 1st with an overwhelming amount of points. But before the impression of this song could disappear, another piece had jumped out at them.

It is a song where three sopranos have to make sounds as if they are three instruments. It did not deliver its message through lyrics. All it demanded was a single ‘ah ah’ sound. An experimental music that uses the soprano as an instrument.

“Isn’t it hard to decide which is superior and which is inferior?”

“I agree. It’s a situation where we need to choose between Haydn and Schoenberg.”

The professors did not look as if they dreaded the situation of having to choose the better of the two pieces. They were all smiling with joy that two amazing songs could emerge at the same time. They were happy that the students’ workmanship was being upgraded every year.

“What do you think of doing this?”

Professor Hirani was being ambitious because he thought it a waste to choose just one song.

“Let’s leave the two songs as tied in 1st place and ask Maestro Bruno Kazel to perform

both. I think he'll accept it."

"And what if he says that he'll only do one due to circumstances?"

"Then we'll ask him to do the piano concerto since it fully uses the orchestra. We can ask the composer of the other song to command it himself."

"That is a good idea."

"Before that, don't we need to think of the pianist?"

While everyone was in happy contemplation, one professor spoke with a serious expression. That is when everyone else remembered something they had been forgetting.

"This... The pianist... It'll be a problem."

"I'll say. Is there a student who can play the piano like this?"

"This is a big problem. It'll only be possible for a veteran pianist who has been performing for a long time to have such deterrence... Who among those young students could....."

"I think there might be someone among the kids that went out for the Long Thibaud Competition."

However, Professor Hirani shook his head.

"It'll be hard. The winning student will have to start preparing for a world tour right away, and a losing student... They won't want to come out in a regular performance."

They did not know which student had written this song but he or she was throwing a lot of interesting issues at them.

"Well this isn't the time for this now. Let's check first."

One of the professors picked up the conference room phone and made a call out.

"Yes, we have made our decision. It is number 9 and 14."

When the employee at reception told him who wrote the two songs, the professor holding the receiver widened his eyes and asked again,

“Excuse me? Are you sure? Okay... okay. I see.”

The professor put the phone down and had a strange expression on his face.

“Number 9 is Alexander Dubcek. And they said number 14 is by Jun Hyuk Jang.”

“By Jang, do you mean?”

“Yes. That Jang.”

“Really? I thought that a song like this had been in preparation for at least half a year.....”

“Do you think it could be a song he made before he enrolled?”

Professor Hirani remembered what Jun Hyuk said last week.

“No. Thinking about what Jun Hyuk said, he started preparing this song a week ago.”

He had easily created a 30 minute piano concerto within a week. A concerto including a piano with such maturity. When the professors thought about the scores they had seen in Jun Hyuk’s application, they realized why they had brought him into the school. It had to be because of these kinds of things.

Randall Poster, professor of the piano, snapped his finger and burst out in laughter,

“I see. Then there’s no reason to worry about the pianist anymore. Ha ha.”

“Aha. I guess that’s how it works out.”

Professor Hirani also realized why Professor Poster was laughing.

“There’s no need to choose another pianist. Jun is saying that he’ll play it himself.”

Everyone was relieved at Randall and Hirani’s words. One of their worries had been resolved.

“Then the 2nd song is Alexander Dubchek.”

“Isn’t Alexander Dubchek an oboe major?”

“That’s right. And he’s graduating next year.”

“The youngest freshman and oldest senior... And it feels like their pieces were switched... It’ll be really fun this year.”

“Since this song is dependent on the abilities of the conductor, there’s no need to worry. And it seems there won’t be any issue with the 3 sopranos... I believe the students will be able to handle this much with ease.”

“Then should we meet with the two?”

Chapter 109

When Jun Hyuk got to the conference room on Professor Hirani's call, there was a grungy looking boy he was seeing for the first time. Also, there was not just Professor Hirani but 3 other professors drinking coffee and smiling.

"Are you two meeting for the first time? Say hi to each other. This is Jun. And this is Alexander."

The two boys lightly shook hands and sat opposite the professors.

"I'm sure you can guess why we called you?"

"Excuse me? Oh, is it because of the judging.....?"

Alexander's eyes sparked.

"That's right. Your songs were picked together as first place. Unanimously. No one disagreed to this."

"I see. Thank you."

Unlike Alexander who was expressing his happiness, Jun Hyuk eyed Alexander for a moment as if surprised. It was because he had never seen him in composition classes. There are less than 30 students majoring in composition. He knew everyone's faces even if they were in different grades.

This scary looking person is not a composition major.

"First, Jun. I'm sure you're thinking of playing the piano yourself?"

How would this teenager express his youth? Professor Randall Poster was slightly excited at the thought of hearing Jun Hyuk's extreme pianissimo. However, Jun Hyuk's response made all of his expectations come crashing down.

"No. There's another pianist I'm thinking of. Honestly, I was able to write this song in a week because it's what I thought of after listening to her perform....."

Alexander who was listening from next to Jun Hyuk furrowed his eyebrows. One week? What kind of song was it that he had written it in a week? It had taken him 2 months of revision to write his 8 minute song.

"Hm. I'm sorry but we can't choose a pianist you have in mind if you don't intend to play it yourself. We need to pick the members through fair auditions."

Professor Randall Poster did not throw away his anticipation for Jun Hyuk's piano. With this, wouldn't Jun Hyuk play it himself?

"Ah, I see."

"There's nothing we can do. No matter who you thought of, this song has been revealed. It's a song that anyone can play from now on. It is its premiere, but we can't give preference to the pianist you have in mind."

"I understand. Then we'll have to have auditions."

Jun Hyuk thought it a pity, but did not worry. He did not have confidence up to the 3rd part, but the 4th part is an impossible performance unless Amelia plays it. Not just anyone can play the piano with such explosive strength.

"And we'll have to keep it a secret that you're the composer of the selected song until we choose a pianist."

Professor Poster could tell that Jun Hyuk did not have any intention to play the piano. All he wanted now was for a good pianist to perform.

"That's because we give students a week before the soloist audition, but all of the pianists in the school will bother you if they know that you're the composer. They'll want to hear how you interpreted the song. And it's inevitable that people will misunderstand if you have personal relations with some of these people."

"Ah, I see. You're saying it needs to be fair?"

"Yes. You understand?"

The professors shifted their gazes to Alexander.

Oboe major Alexander Dubcek is from a Czechoslovakian musical family. His

grandfather was a pianist and he was born from a violinist father and cellist mother.

He is an amazing performer who will be joining the Prague Philharmonic as the 2nd oboe.

“Alexander, the same goes for you. The sopranos need to be chosen through a fair audition. You need to keep quiet.”

“Of course.”

When they came out of the conference room, Jun Hyuk asked what he had been holding back,

“Uh... You said you’re an oboist?”

“Yes.”

“Then how come I’ve never seen you in the concerts?”

“Ah, I’m done after this year. This is my last semester. Most people can’t participate in the concerts in their last semester. There are a lot of things we need to prepare for.”

“I see. I would like to hear your oboe before you leave the school. Then goodbye.”

Alexander was a little surprised by Jun Hyuk who had turned to leave after saying what he wanted, but there was something he needed to check. He wanted to see Jun Hyuk’s score that was up on the school intranet.



The notice board on the campus intranet was noisy. No one could hide their excitement that not only were there two selected songs, but there would be auditions for the piano, soprano, and violin in one week.

The violin is not for the concert but to fill the spaces emptied by the members who had gone to Paris for the Long Thibaud Competition.

Things like the cinematic quality of the selected songs did not matter. The famous maestro of the Philadelphia Philharmonic is coming. What is important is standing

out in his eyes and gaining recognition.

All of the violinists, pianists, and sopranos in the school printed the score and began practicing. They only have one week's time.

Alexander could not believe it when he saw Jun Hyuk's score. It felt like a song Haydn wrote in his late years. It would be fitting to say that a white-haired, long bearded man had written the song. He could not believe that the young Asian kid he had just met wrote the song.

On the other hand, Jun Hyuk smiled as he looked through Alexander's score. It is a fun song. He could feel a bustle throughout the song as if the neighborhood old ladies had come out to chat. He had not been able to help but smile when he thought of how someone who looks like a hoodlum could have such a tender consciousness.

As soon as Amelia saw the score, her hands shook. She was sure that this song was for her.

It was pianissimo, what she had to work on the most, until the 3rd part and then her greatest advantage and specialty, the passionate piano, began in the 4th.

She suddenly remembered a melody! Amelia looked at the 3rd part again.

The Bach cantata she played on the harmonica and then again on the piano! The 5 cantata melodies had been broken apart and cleverly placed across 12 segments.

Amelia realized that the composer of this song is the skinny Asian kid. She was running with the score in her hand to confirm the composer, but stopped.

What would she say once she met him? Would she ask him to help her interpret the song? Will she ask him to play the orchestra part for her? The soloist is chosen through the auditions anyway. More than anything, she first needed to ask herself if she wanted to play this song.

Amelia went back to the practice room and sat in front of the piano. At first, she played the way it was indicated on the score. There was no splendor through the 3rd part. An even pace, there were no parts that were so fast it would make it seem as though she has 20 fingers.

The listener is lonely and the flow continues so slowly that the performer feels as if

their patience is being tested. It even required pianississimo.

She played until the 3rd part and took her hands off of the piano when the forte began in the 4th part. She had been so drained of all her energy while playing the piano with such concentration until the 3rd part that she could not play any longer. She just wondered if the Asian composer was in his right mind to demand such a rapid change of the pianist.

Chapter 110

The pianist audition began one week later.

There were only 4 candidates for the piano soloist. To be honest, it is not configuration that brings joy to the pianist and it is not a song in which the pianist stands out. Furthermore, there were few applicants because most pianists had gone to Paris to participate in the Long Thibaud Competition.

However, the greatest reason is that there are a lot of students who gave up on trying to play the piece. At first, they approached it with ease because of the calm melody. After 20 something minutes of carefully playing the piano as if handling a glass, their shoulders became stiff.

It did not go beyond the professors' expectations. It is a song difficult to handle for a young and hot-blooded pianist because it requires extreme patience without any emotion.

On the stage with two grand pianos, Jun Hyuk was sitting at one. He will be playing the orchestra part.

The soloist applicants were all puzzled because they did not know why he was sitting there, but became shocked at the professors' explanations.

By the progression of the piano, they had expected the composer to be a mature graduate student. But a freshman? On top of that, the rumored Asian kid.

The heaviness they felt from the audition was about to disappear because of their shock. However, the piano was still hard.

Jun Hyuk did not pay attention to the pianists' performances and kept playing the orchestra part quietly. There is no need to match it to the pianist. No matter how the 4 pianists play, he needs to quietly play it in the same way. Is it not a fair audition?

Amelia went third. She was also the only pianist who had not been surprised when she saw Jun Hyuk.

It was just that one week was too short of a time for her to learn pianissimo perfectly. It was hard for Jun Hyuk to follow Amelia as she began to come crashing down at the start of the 3rd part. The short 3rd part ended and when the 4th part began, she exploded in a proper performance. Her strength left such an impression that the judges forgot about the mistakes she made in the 3rd part. When the song ended, Amelia left the theater as though running away. She knew that Jun Hyuk wrote that song for her, but she was feeling guilt for ruining it.

When the four pianists' performances ended, the professors were frowning and looking at the scorecards. As their expressions indicated, none of the performers had caught their eye.

"What we had been dreading has happened."

"Right? It seems this piano is not fitting for the young students."

"There wouldn't be a reason for a 20 year old who can handle this song to be at our school. He or she would have already been successful as a pianist."

"It seems a freshman has given us a proper assignment. It's like a bomb."

"Wasn't Amelia the best among them?"

"The 4th part was really impressive. But since she can't last until the 3rd part....."

While the professors were lamenting, Professor Randall Poster jumped up from his chair and went on the stage.

"Jun, can you try playing the piano?"

"Excuse me? Me?"

"Yeah. Just in case. If there isn't a fitting pianist, you'll have to perform. We need to be respectful to the maestro. We can't send him a lacking pianist from our school."

Unlike the words he was saying, Professor Poster had a faint smile. It seemed he was anticipating Jun Hyuk's piano more than he was worried.

The professors in the seats also looked full of anticipation. Would the composer have created the song after figuring out all of these challenges?

"I'll play the orchestra part for you, so let us hear it one time."

Jun Hyuk started pressing the keys carefully. He played the piano until the 3rd part, barely pressing his fingers down as though washing a crystal champagne glass with a cloth, and then freed his suppressed fingers for the 4th part. It was as though he was expressing Amelia's passion.

When he finished performing even the 4th part successfully, the professors brightened. If Jun Hyuk were to play, they could have the performance without issues.

Professor Randall Poster was the only person who kept sighing. Why isn't this outstanding boy majoring in the piano? It was the moment he decided he would make Jun Hyuk take lessons no matter what.

After he finished playing the piano, Jun Hyuk said something the professors had not been expecting at all,

"Professor, I have no intention to play the piano at the performance. If I end up playing the piano, the 4 people who auditioned today will have practiced for nothing. If it's too hard to choose a pianist, I think it's 'fair' to take my song out. Then."

Jun Hyuk bowed his head slightly and left the stage. The soprano candidates would be coming in soon. He ran into Alexander Dubcek who had been waiting to see the sopranos audition for his song. Alexander was already dazed from hearing Jun Hyuk's piano. Not just composition, but he can play the piano perfectly?

Jun Hyuk greeted him lightly and ran out while holding back his laughter. It was too funny no matter how he thought about it.

'An old lady's emotion with that face... It's a mystery.'

Once all of the auditions were over, the professors were scrutinizing over the pianist. Jun Hyuk had made it clear that he would not play the piano. What an embarrassment it would be if they did not have a proper pianist after inviting a maestro.

"Let's choose Amelia who the best for now. There's nothing we can do but give her special lessons until the performance."

"But isn't her teacher, Professor Greenfield, in Paris right now because of Long Thibaud?"

The professors all looked at Professor Randall Poster.

"I'm okay with it as long as Amelia is willing to do it."

There is no reason for him to turn down the chance to teach a junior with outstanding talent. Professor Poster accepted it happily.

Bruno Kazel, conductor of the Philadelphia Philharmonic, read through the score he received in his e-mail and let out a low sigh. This sigh was of condolence rather than admiration from seeing extraordinary music.

The song is exceptional. It just does not have a youthful wit. It felt like he was seeing an old relic wearing a curly haired wig, shorts, stockings, and leather shoes. It was to the point where he thought he was seeing Haydn.

'Are there still youngsters these days writing music like this?'

Bruno Kazel had been defined as an innovative maestro and had happily accepted the invitation to command at Clayton University.

He wanted to enjoy the pleasure of the youth's songs that destroy form.

But this year's selection is a strict classical. The title is a piano concerto, but it is a song where the piano is the most important.

It is a song that drags the pianist into the 18th century. He opened the file for the score that came in joint 1st place with a bitter feeling about this song that did not meet his expectations.

The title is The Concerto for 3 Sopranos. It is a fun song where the sopranos battle for 8 minutes. It did seem a little rushed, but he thought that there really was a youthful feeling to it.

Bruno Kazel slowly looked through both of the scores again and sat in front of the piano. He had realized that the song like Haydn's music did not have an ordinary piano.

When he was done with the 1st part, his fingertips ached. As he thought of how the orchestra would sound in his head and played the piano, he had to show extreme simplicity.

'What is this song?'

It seemed as though he had kept Chopin or Liszt in mind when he was making a Haydn song. He wondered if there was a pianist among the students at Clayton who could play this type of song.

It would have to be an already famous pianist to play this song. Does this mean that there is a hidden gem at Clayton? Does Clayton School of Music mean to introduce this gem to him?

'I'll have to go to New York a little early.'

Chapter 111

Everyone finished the 20 fierce days of Long Thibaud and returned. However, the results had not been good. According to Danny, it was a breakthrough for East Asia and annihilation for America.

Korean, Chinese, and Japanese participants' names were on the list of runner-ups, but there was not a single American. This is not talking about American as a nationality, but as the place where the participants completed their studies.

It was to the point where students who had the competition as their priority were considering moving to a school in Europe.

"Jun, I'm going to go out for Long Thibaud no matter what the year after the next."

Danny was full of confidence after seeing the participants' abilities with his own eyes.

"Let's go out for it together. With your piano, you're definitely a winner."

Danny had heard the pianists who had been labeled as being at a high overall level. However, he had not heard a piano that made his heart beat as much as Jun Hyuk's did.

"No. It isn't my dream to become a pianist."

"Of course I know that. But you should know that a lot of composers are famous pianists."

"Anyway, I don't want to. If you want, I can do the accompaniment for you."

"I don't want that. It's obvious that the accompanist will overshadow the performer. Am I crazy?"

Danny was extremely jealous of Jun Hyuk's talent but there were a lot of times when he thought that it was a relief that Jun Hyuk had not chosen to play the piano. He thought it a relief that this tremendous competitor, a competitor that he could never follow, had chosen composition.

On top of that, if he shows his music to this future maestro, Jun Hyuk might compose a song with his violin in mind.

“Jun, tell me honestly. What do you think of my violin?”

“You’re good. Have confidence.”

“Then why is the song for the performance a piano concerto? Don’t you need to write a violin song for me, your best friend?”

He spoke as though joking, but his tone was full of regret.

“That? That’s nothing really. It’s just a practice song.”

“Practice song?”

He was chosen for the performance with a practice song? Danny had already seen Jun Hyuk’s score on the internet. If that song is just a practice song, what is a real one like? Danny remembered the title of that song.

“Oh right, it said the title of that song is Piano Concerto No. 7... Then doesn’t that mean there are 6 other songs?”

“That’s right. I wrote them while I was in Korea.”

“By chance, do you have the scores with you?”

Jun Hyuk tapped his head with his fingers.

“Ah.....”

“So the songs are in your head and the scores are in Korea.”

When Danny saw Jun Hyuk nod his head, he spoke in a quiet voice,

“Then do you have a song for the violin?”

“Of course I do. Why? Do you want to see it?”

“It’d be an honor, maestro.”

Danny rotated his arms and bowed.

Jun Hyuk took out sheet music and started writing notes quickly. Danny's eyes quickly followed the notes from beside Jun Hyuk. When Jun Hyuk completed the score within moments, Danny quickly took it.

"If I finish practicing this song, you'll play the accompaniment?"

"Why?"

"Let's show this at the concert."

"Ha ha."

As Jun Hyuk suddenly started laughing, Danny's eyes widened.

"Why are you laughing?"

"I played around with that a little while I was arranging it. If you want to play that perfectly, you'll have to practice that like crazy this winter break. And if you can play that song completely, you'll be good enough to go out for the competition."

Danny's widened eyes did not come back to their original state. Had he made it so that he could practice?

Though Jun Hyuk always seemed indifferent, he was very considerate of others at times like this. Danny was touched and hugged Jun Hyuk, kissing his cheek.



Bruno Kazel decided to stay in New York until the Philadelphia Philharmonic's Christmas concert with the excuse of the Clayton performance. Once he arrived in New York with his whole family, he left them at the hotel and headed to Clayton.

Unlike the conductors who usually arrived at the school 2 days before the concert, he had come to New York a week before. The students cheered at the maestro's surprise visit. The maestro smile and was friendly to anyone who approached him and spoke informally with the students.

Of course he drank coffee with the professors as they discussed the defeat at Long Thibaud.

“Then can I meet the leaders of the concert?”

“Yes. Would you like to start with the orchestra members?”

“No. I was hoping to meet the composers first. I’m sure I should get information on the songs first. Also, it may be uncomfortable, but I wanted to meet them separately. One at a time.”

The professors were puzzled because they did not know why he wanted to meet them separately, but they had to think that he had his own reasons.

Alexander Dubcek could not let go of Bruno Kazel’s hand and was full of awe.

There is a reason why the students are in a craze over Bruno Kazel. He is someone who demands novelty so much so that he is called an innovative conductor. He prefers contemporary music to classical or romantic music and he often includes jazz into his repertoire. He does not even hesitate to work with pop musicians who are not very famous.

When he was inaugurated as the conductor and music director of the Philadelphia Philharmonic, he put a joint performance with South American jazz greats on his first stage against the opposition of the Board of Directors.

Local supporters pressured the Board of Directors for his dismissal even though there were 3 years left to his contract. The Board of Directors were going to kick him out with the resolution to pay the contract fees, but they all kept their mouths shut when his live performance album had a sales rate of 4 million copies.

This Bruno Kazel was receiving the overwhelming support of young musicians.

While Bruno Kazel looked at Alexander who could not let go of his hand, he suddenly remembered something,

“Are you by chance that Dubcek? Of Prague?”

“Yes.”

It is a modest response, but his voice was full of pride.

"I see. I used to enjoy your grandparents' music... I didn't know you'd be the grandson. I guess it's in the genes?"

A family with three generations of music. This is common in Europe.

"It seems your mother had a great influence seeing as how you chose the oboe."

"It was a question of choice rather than influence."

"Your parents must be proud. You excel in composition, not just the oboe."

It could be that this young Czechoslovakian musician has more talent in composition than he does in the oboe.

"Then should we discuss the song? Should I say that it's fun? It even has a comical feeling to it... How did you come to write it?"

"I once saw three women having a picnic in Central Park. I could not tell if they were single moms or housewives, but while the children were running around on their own, the women looked like they had been freed."

Alexander recalled the moment he thought of the music and started chattering his explanation.

"They had looked annoyed while they were holding the children's hands before they found their spots on the park lawn."

"So you're saying that you saw the change in their expressions and guessed what they were thinking?"

He had found music in an unexpected moment. It meant that he is extremely sensitive.

"Yes."

"But I couldn't feel that openness or joy in your music."

"Because those women also know that it is only for that quick moment. When they return to their daily lives, they'll have to endure the stress of clashing with their

children.”

He had expressed a feeling that anyone who had cared for a child could agree with.

“Ha ha. It’s so realistic. I know that feeling. I have three kids. None of them are over 10 years old yet. It’s really war everyday.”

Bruno Kazel was pleased and laughed loudly.

“But why sopranos instead of the oboe? Isn’t your major the oboe?”

“I tried it a few times, but the three women’s feelings did not come out no matter what I did. A better player might have been able to... But I thought a direct depiction would be better and chose the sopranos.”

“Right. The oboe is a gentleman’s instrument. It would be difficult for anyone to try to express a young mother’s hysteria with the gentle oboe.”

Bruno Kazel spoke cautiously,

“Have you seen the song that was chosen along with yours?”

“Yes. It’s amazing.”

Alexander shook his head.

“Really? I thought it is a bit boring. Isn’t it too generic?”

Bruno Kazel watched Alexander’s expression.

“It could be, but not just anyone can come up just something like that in a matter of a week.”

“A week? Are you saying that he wrote that piano concerto in a week?”

He had thrown the question to see how Alexander evaluated a competitor’s music, but he had come to know something unexpected. A week’s short time also meant that he had not revised the song.

Ultimately, it meant that he had written it while pulling inspiration from any incident

or moment. What kind of moment had he experienced that he came up with such a classical music? Had Haydn come out in his dreams to give him that song?

Alexander looked at Bruno Kazel's surprised face and kept speaking,

"Yes. He's a freshman who is rumored to be plenty capable of doing that much."

"Freshman? Well... this is more of a surprise than the music. A freshman writing a song that has the essence of Haydn?"

"You'll be more surprised when you meet him yourself."

Chapter 112

“Alright, then should we talk about this music that reproduced Haydn? You said your name is Jun?”

“Yes.”

Bruno Kazel thought of Alexander’s words that he would be more surprised once he met Jun Hyuk in person. Asians look younger in general, but the boy who came through the doors looked as though he could be in high school.

Looking at the music and the composers, it was as though the two boys had been switched. The strict classical form written by a youth from a European musical family. And a song depicting a fun scene by a witty boy from Asia. This would be much more plausible.

“Is there a fun story to your song as well?”

“Excuse me?”

“Ah, I heard that the song chosen along with yours was written to depict a scene witnessed in Central Park. I was wondering if you had a story like that as well.”

“There’s nothing like that.”

If he did not have a motive, it meant that he had just written the song while looking at a blank sheet. It is the hardest method of creation. There needs to be an incredible educational background for someone to do this within a week. He is a freshman... He felt like it made less sense as he saw more.

“Really? Then it’s just a great melody?”

“Um... That’s a piano practice song.”

“What? A practice song?”

“Yes. It can only be seen as a proper performance if the player can do pianissimo and

pianississimo. If the piano cannot show the simplicity until the 3rd part, the whole song is ruined.”

“Hm. I was asking because I didn’t feel anything when I was looking at your score but... that’s what it was. Do you think it might have highlighted technical aspects too much for a young teenager? I was expecting it to be expressing something great.”

Bruno Kazel kept questioning Jun Hyuk to see if there was something hidden in his music.

“I just wrote it for a passionate pianist who reminds me of fireworks because I saw that she was working hard to try to suppress her strength.”

“She? The pianist is a woman?”

“Yes.”

“Could it be your girlfriend? Is it a tribute to your girlfriend?”

“Ah... no. A repayment for a single passionate kiss? That’s as much as it would be.”

“What? Kiss? Well, well. Ha ha.”

Bruno Kazel burst out in laughter because he had finally discovered the song’s motive. Could there be better motive for a song than a passionate kiss with a motive?

Bruno Kazel laughed for a bit and nodded as if it were definite.

“Very good. If you were gifted a passionate by a woman, you must give something in return. More so if she is a beauty.”

“Hm. Then I guess I’ll have to make three or four more for her.”

Jun Hyuk smiled as he thought of Amelia. Bruno Kazel noticed the hidden meaning in Jun Hyuk’s words.

“Oh? You’re saying she’s that much of a beauty? You’re making me curious.”

It really is great to work with young students. He can enjoy finding light excitement in such unexpected things.

"So the themes of both selected songs are women. I'm telling you men make music because of women. Ha ha."

Bruno Kazel fully understood the thoughts of the composers. Now he must go to the theater where the protagonists of the performance await him.

"Then shall we go to meet the band and pianist?"

Jun Hyuk however, shook his head.

"I'm done up to here. The concert is yours."

"But won't it be better for you to see the rehearsal?"

"It is my understanding that it is the composer's role up to moving the music onto the paper."

Bruno Kazel saw a look of seeking challenge in Jun Hyuk's eyes rather than modesty.

"So you'll just see what kind of music comes from your song at the concert?"

"Yes."

"Whether it comes out well or not?"

Jun Hyuk responded to Bruno Kazel's provocation without the slightest bit of hesitation,

"Yes. All I need to see is the result."

Once a script leaves the writer's hands, it is all up to the producer who is in charge of its presentation. It is right that everything from the camera angle and lights to the background music are left up to the producer. The composer writes the script on sheet music and the conductor just performs his interpretation while looking at that script.

"Well... You're a scary composer. I guess I won't be able to perform one of your songs ever again if you don't like it?"

"Isn't that inevitable?"

Bruno Kazel could not hide his surprise at Jun Hyuk's obstinate response, but he

immediately laughed.

"This is why I like young people. This confidence. I guess I'm being tested instead of the students. Okay. I'll have to do well so I don't regret it later."

Bruno Kazel went to the theater in good spirits and Jun Hyuk went back to his dorm. He liked that Bruno Kazel was so informal for a maestro.

The CH orchestra, three sopranos, and a pianist were waiting in the theater to greet Bruno Kazel. He could tell who the pianist is before he received introductions.

"Oh, a beauty who deserves 10 songs rather than 3 or 4."

The 4 girls including the sopranos just blinked as they did not know who he was referring to.

The waiting professors took Bruno Kazel down to the seats as they said they had something to discuss with him.

"I'm sorry maestro, but the pianist Amelia received the highest scores during auditions, but she was not able to finish this song. She is practicing at the moment to play this song as well."

"Amelia? Oh, the beauty the composer spoke of is named Amelia. There's even passion in her name."

It seemed he did not care even though they told him that she is a pianist who came crashing down during the auditions.

"What of it? Isn't this a school? The goal isn't to receive the applause and encore of the audience. You never know, she might perform wonderfully. Then it'll be the birth of another great pianist."

The professors felt relief and gratitude for Bruno Kazel's positive thinking.

"I see. We didn't think that far ahead. The stage is all yours, maestro."

"Then I will start with the stars of the show. Professors, do not worry. I'll take responsibility for everyone until the concert."

"We have a lot of luck this year. To think a maestro teaching our students himself for a week. Ha ha."



The sopranos were able to perform Alexander's song without problems. Just as the professors had been worrying about, the piano kept stopping.

Amelia was angry with herself and kept banging down on the innocent piano.

After repeating this a few times, Bruno Kazel made Amelia stop.

"Alright, let's take a 10 minute break."

He put his baton down and went to Amelia who could not lift her head.

"Amelia, can you come see me?"

The two came down from the stage and sat at a distance from where they could not be heard on stage.

"Amelia. I have 3 children. Do you know what characterizes children?"

"Being noisy?"

"That too but the greatest characteristic is that they don't stay still even for a moment. They don't even walk around. They run no matter how short the distance is. Even inside the house."

Children who run around the house, flipping everything. Amelia thought he was criticizing her music.

"Do I make that much of a mess?"

"Listen until the end. There are times when our children are really still."

"When they sleep?"

"That's the same for adults and children. It's when they watch TV."

“TV?”

“Yeah. You know those kids cartoons or those shows where people come out wearing doll costumes.”

It is not a toy or a snack. Something that takes sight, not senses of touch or taste. Only that can keep a child still.

“I guess so.”

“What if you think about it like this? You’re a child who can’t control your overwhelming energy. My orchestra is a TV show.”

Bruno Kazel wanted to hold Amelia’s hearing instead of her sight.

“Focus on the orchestra a little more instead of staring at the score or worrying about the piano. Just think of the piano as an interjection or reaction while you’re enjoying the orchestra’s music.

“But...”

He is telling her not to concentrate on the piano? That means it is not a coordinate performance between the orchestra and piano. Bruno Kazel winked and smiled at Amelia, anticipating what she was going to say.

“Let’s just start out like this. Slowly. There’s no need to rush, is there?”

He is telling her how to do it. How to take the first step to express the moderation that the composer is demanding. She could not refute it since the maestro himself was letting her know a customized method.

Of course the effect was good. She played the keys slowly and lightly as if she had become part of the audience enjoying the music. What she heard was pianissimo, but she felt as though she was playing with a machine. A performance fooling the audience. She played the keys quietly though because he said that this is the first step.



The concert started with the 3rd place song. The piece arranged for a string quartet

was of a light and simple configuration and the audience gave genuine applause.

Continuing was Alexander's short song conducted by Bruno Kazel.

[Concerto for 3 Sopranos] had a fun configuration that made the audience laugh occasionally and it gave the feeling that they were watching a short play. The performance was so great that Alexander was not just satisfied but in awe.

They went on to Jun Hyuk's concerto without a break. When Amelia appeared on stage in a black dress, the male students welcomed her with tremendous cheering.

She was full of confidence unlike she had been during the auditions, and Bruno Kazel faced her with ease.

When the orchestra's introduction began and the melody flowed, a low sound came out. A peaceful piano continued like dew falling from grass.

As the 1st part ended, a few people clapped subconsciously. It is a music that is complete even with one part.

Jun Hyuk however had an objectionable expression.

'He's using running away as a method? Who thought of this trick?'

It was hard to keep listening, but he needed to listen until the end. He wanted to watch how they would express the 4th part after running away for 3 parts.

When the 4th part began with a piano that was as if it were going to break, Jun Hyuk stood up. He had confirmed the disastrous results he had been expecting when he heard the 1st part.

He quietly came out of the theater and returned to the dorms. The dorms were not ringing with the usual bustle and even felt lonely. Only, the sound of a violin floated around the empty dorms.

Danny did not pay any attention to the school event and was just hanging on to the song that Jun Hyuk had given him.

Chapter 113

The concert ended and the party started. It was just something simple with beer and taco chips.

Bruno Kazel looked around for today's star while he was surrounded by students. He did not see Jun Hyuk and Amelia.

"Professor, have you seen Jun?"

Bruno Kazel did not have a good expression because he did not see Jun Hyuk, who he had been most concerned about.

"I haven't seen him either... He'll probably be in his room."

"Why? Isn't he the star today?"

"Jun doesn't seem to like this kind of noise. There were a few parties thrown by the students, but he never attended."

Could it be that he did not attend the party because he did not like the performance and not because he did not like noise? He considered this but thought that it would be best to confirm with Jun Hyuk and put his beer down on the table.

"What is Jun's room number?"

"Why? Are you going to go look for him yourself?"

"Yes."

'I'll have to listen to the original composer's evaluation. For some reason, I feel uneasy.'

Bruno Kazel could not get himself to say these words aloud.

When he stepped out of the elevator into the dorm hall, silence calmed him unlike the noise of the party.

As Bruno Kazel got closer to Jun Hyuk's room, a violin and guitar ensemble grew louder. Not surprisingly, the sound was coming from Jun Hyuk's room.

He listened to the sound for a while. It was a violin solo song and the guitar was an accompaniment. After listening for over 10 minutes, he realized two things that made his heart beat faster.

The violinist was great for a student and the song that he was playing is a song that he was hearing for the first time, but it was so outstanding that it was a pity for a student to be performing it.

The music stopped suddenly and two people began discussion, but he could not hear it clearly.

Bruno Kazel eventually knocked on the door and when the door opened, there was a curly-haired boy with a violin in his hand.

“Oh my god. Maestro Kazel!”

Jun Hyuk who had been sitting on the bed with his guitar bolted up.

When he looked around the room, there were two electric guitars on top of the bed and a few scores on a music stand in the center of the room.

“This is the real party.”

Bruno Kazel approached the stand.

“Would it be okay if I took a look at the score?”

“Of course, maestro.”

Danny answered quickly as if it were his own score, but the score was already in the maestro's hand.

Bruno Kazel tried to read through the music quickly and spoke as he looked at Danny,

“Your name is.....?”

“Daniel Laprielle. I'm a violinist as you can see.”

Danny spoke while lifting up the violin and bow in his hands.

"Okay. Daniel, did you memorize this whole song?"

"Of course."

"Then lend this to me."

Bruno Kazel took the score and sat in front of the piano.

"Alright, then shall we start the party again?"

Danny thought he was dreaming. To play the violin to the piano of a great!

A short while after Danny started playing the violin, the piano melody started. Bruno Kazel pressed the piano keys and looked at Jun Hyuk.

It was a look telling him to enjoy the party together.

'Geez. This man is really rash.'

Jun Hyuk smirked and began to pick at the guitar strings.

Jun Hyuk and Bruno Kazel's improv performance started in sync with Danny's violin.

On top of a simple piano that held the key precisely, a sad violin melody danced gently and the acoustic guitar was dancing as it held the violin's hand.

The sound of music spread over the empty dorms for more than 10 minutes.

Even after the performance was over, Danny's excited expression did not go away. There is no reason for the excitement to go away easily when he had just performed with a great.

Bruno Kazel's face was red when he got up from the piano. He even looked more excited than Danny did.

"Jun, is this also a song that you wrote?"

"Yes, maestro. Jun arranged this song to train me. It was originally a violin concerto."

Danny's answer was faster than Jun Hyuk could say anything.

"Why didn't you submit this kind of song for the concert? Ah, I'm not saying that the piano concerto was bad. I'm just saying this because this song is much better. I even want to perform this song at the Philadelphia Christmas concert right away. Impressive. Really impressive."

Danny became more excited because Bruno Kazel showed his admiration and did not hold back on compliments. It was as if he were the composer.

Jun Hyuk on the other hand, was not excited or surprised. He had a more cold expression.

"Because the song's goal was different."

"I see. You said the piano concerto for the performance was a practice song?"

"Yes. A song to practice with needs to be faithful to its goal."

Bruno Kazel looked at the score again and confirmed something.

"It says the opus is 4, so does that mean you have more? The piano practice song was number 7, right? Is that?"

"Yes. There are a good amount, but none of them are quality enough to show others yet."

Jun Hyuk's words did not sound like modesty to the two people. His standard is different. His thoughts are different so that he cannot be satisfied with such a great violin concerto.

That was when Bruno changed his evaluation on this Asian youth. He is not a teenager who is copying the old-fashioned classical. This piano song that sounded like Haydn had just been a song to practice with like he said.

Once he realized this, he was scared to bring up the reason why he had come looking for Jun Hyuk. What would be his evaluation? Would he never give him another chance to perform?

Bruno Kazel opened his mouth with a trembling heart,

“What did you think of the performance today? You came right?”

“I was sitting there until the 4th part.”

“Then does that mean you left in the middle of the performance? Why?”

It felt like his heart fell. It only meant one thing that he had not listened to the performance until the end.

“You won’t want to hear it.”

“What? Well... I guess you didn’t like it. Shall we hear the criticism?”

Danny’s mouth dried up as he listened to the two speaking. Jun Hyuk’s English was still not capable of using euphemisms. It was obvious that he would give a straightforward assessment.

‘Well he’s someone who would openly criticize someone even if he was good at English.’

Contrary to Danny’s concerns, Jun Hyuk began to speak slowly and carefully, giving his assessment.

“I wanted a balloon right before it popped. With even the slightest bit of strength, pop. I wanted you to touch that balloon until the 3rd part and pop it in the 4th.”

Jun Hyuk motioned with his hands as though popping a balloon with his two hands.

“But for this performance, it was as though you were so scared of popping the balloon that you just took a lot of air out of it. So much that it would not pop no matter how much you touched it. Then there’s no way it’ll pop in the 4th part... It was a performance that just ripped it apart.”

“Wow. You noticed that? Do you normally have a great ear? Or did you notice it because you’re the composer?”

He had given a precise assessment that could not be any more exact. Jun Hyuk’s English is a bit broken, but Bruno Kazel fully understood what he meant.

“We were just faithful to your original purpose for the song as practice. It’ll take a while before you can hear the pianissimo you want from Amelia. All I did was let her

know a small way to approach that pianissimo. Now she'll steadily grow step by step into a complete pianist. She'll be able to express the difficult pianissimo with ease."

However, Jun Hyuk's expression became colder than when he was giving his criticism.

"Do you think that? Then the method is wrong. It does not help Amelia at all. No, it could do more damage."

Danny's legs shook when Jun Hyuk did not stop at criticizing the maestro's performance, but went on to his teaching methods.

What if this great man became angry and stormed out of the room? If that happens, it would become difficult for Clayton graduates to join the Philadelphia Philharmonic as long as Bruno Kazel remained as the conductor.

"What? It's wrong? It'll do damage?"

Bruno Kazel's patience was not as thin as Danny worried.

"Of course. You are underestimating Amelia as a pianist. She's not very far from it. She has the potential to change at any moment at once. If Danny here is the type who advances one step at a time, Amelia is the type who struggles for a bit and goes up 10 steps at once."

Danny could not tell if Jun Hyuk's evaluation of himself is a compliment or criticism.

"You needed to have her hold a balloon on the verge of popping even if it ruined the performance. If you had done that, the results could have been different."

Bruno Kazel felt like he had been hit hard over the head with a hammer. He had not thought that he would hear criticism for his performance let alone that he is an incompetent conductor incapable of recognizing talent.

"Why? Why do you think that? What did you see in the girl?"

The tone of his voice went up. It was not because he was angry or because he had run out of patience. He was so curious about what it was that he missed.

Bruno Kazel was looking at Jun Hyuk when Jun Hyuk suddenly got up and sat in front of the piano.

"Listen to this. Amelia will have played like this in the first rehearsal. This is the 2nd part."

Before a minute of Jun Hyuk's piano had even passed, Bruno Kazel's eyes had widened so much he could not open them any more. His jaw dropped.

Jun Hyuk had not appeared once since they made introductions on the first day. How could he perform in the same way Amelia did without hearing it?

The words that came out of Jun Hyuk's mouth after playing for a few more minutes was more shocking.

"You stopped her here, didn't you? And you told her about the deflated balloon. Is that right?"

Bruno Kazel could only nod. It was like Sherlock Holmes painting a full picture of a mystery just by looking at the crime scene. He had even picked up on the exact point where he had stopped the piano.

Is this possible? Bruno Kazel even thought that this is not reality.

Jun Hyuk played the piano again as he spoke,

"Alright, if Amelia had performed at the concert in her messy state, how would you have commanded? If it were me, I would have directed the violins for a more powerful performance to hold Amelia who is getting stronger and faster because she is unable to release her strength. Of course it says forte piano (fp, weakly after playing with power) on the score."

Bruno Kazel thought of the score at this point and realized that there was no displacement.

His fingertips trembled and he felt weak. To create a song with such exact calculations! Who is this boy who writes a concerto after accurately pinpointing a single pianist and thinking of the point at which the performance would fall apart?

"Then Amelia would have stumbled again. It is repeated exactly 4 times until the 3rd part. You can push Amelia who races like a wild horse."

Jun Hyuk got up from the piano and kept speaking without paying attention to Bruno

Kazel who was shaking,

"Of course it could be a failure. I'm sure it could have completely come apart. But I think that it would have been faster for her if you had pushed her to the limit in a real performance."

Like Bruno Kazel, Danny was lost in shock.

Danny had already known that his roommate is better. He is an undeniable genius from the performance, song interpretation, and arranging he showed in the quintet. What he showed today though, took him out of that category completely.

The tip of the iceberg. There is no better way to express it than this. Jun Hyuk was at a very high place, looking down on the quintet members and sending one drop at a time down to them. If he had revealed his full capability, they would have all drowned.

Even though Jun Hyuk's explanation was over, the two could not speak for a while. The sophistication of all of the calculations included in a simple piano practice song. The ability to clearly see what had happened during rehearsal with just the concert results. It was too far beyond common sense for them to understand and accept it.

"Why... Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me about all of the devices hidden in the song?"

Bruno Kazel managed to open his mouth. Jun Hyuk continued to respond frostily,

"Because it's all in the score. I don't know what devices you're talking about, but I did not think that I would need to give a separate explanation when you were going to perform according to the notes anyway."

It was such a dry explanation that he felt shame. It is all in the score. To think that he could not read even that much. Jun Hyuk's words might as well have been this kind of reproach.

This is also something that Bruno Kazel constantly says to his orchestra members and students.

'Look at the score carefully. Everything is in the score. Fight fiercely with the score. Then it'll all work out.'

He did not know that he himself would hear that reproach. And from a freshman at a conservatory as that.



While they were receiving the roaring applause after the performance, Amelia tried to find Jun Hyuk in the audience but could not see him. It was impossible to find one person among a large audience against blinding lights from the start.

When everyone swarmed to the party, Amelia went back to the dorms to change out of her dress. When she saw the piano sitting in the middle of her room, she was overcome with regret. From the day she had played the piano as a joke at age 3, she had never played as though lying as she had today.

Music she was playing for the ears instead of for expression. There won't be anyone in today's applauding audience who will remember her performance.

She sat in front of the piano again. She had already memorized the song, but opened the score. It was hard to even put her hands on the keys. She did not have the confidence to play this song again.

She came out of her room and got on the elevator to attend the party, but she only came down 2 floors. She wanted to see Jun Hyuk. She wanted an honest evaluation, not formal applause. She felt like she needed to hear whatever it was whether it was criticism or condemnation if she wanted to be able to play again.

The corridor was dark because there were only tail lights on, but she saw a line of light. Someone had not closed the door all the way and there was light seeping out of a narrow space between the open doorway. The person she needs to meet is inside that room.

Amelia could not open the door and go into the room. The piano coming from that room was her piano that she had not wanted to think about ever again.

Bruno Kazel's frenzied voice and Jun Hyuk's dry speech also came out. After the awkward silence from the room filled the corridor for a while, Amelia went back to her room.

She felt like she could play the practice song again.

Chapter 114

“Push my morning flight tomorrow back a day. Yeah... I’m going to leave the day after tomorrow. I need to stay an extra day... There’s nothing I can do. Adjust my schedule in Philadelphia... Yeah...”

Bruno Kazel came out of Jun Hyuk’s room and changed his itinerary to return to Philadelphia. It was not that he did not realize this is a nuisance to his manager, but he felt that there would be lingering regret if he just went back like this.

Bruno Kazel left the room, but Danny could not get out of his shock. It has already been 3 months since they shared a room. He had thought that they had gotten a lot closer and that he knew Jun Hyuk well. But he realized today that he had been mistaken in thinking that he knew his roommate well.

Since the first time he got in trouble for reading a score first, he had not even looked at Jun Hyuk through the side of his eye when he was composing. Danny meant to respect Jun Hyuk’s solemn consciousness. He did not know why, but Jun Hyuk always sent his songs to Korea when he completed them. It was not even in an e-mail, but postal with the paper score.

Scores he sent at least once a week. Danny hated himself for not even taking a peek at them. If he had seen even a little, he would have been able to notice Jun Hyuk’s true self.

He needed to push all other thoughts in his head and ask the most important question. Danny cautiously opened his mouth,

“Jun. A slow development with advancement one step at a time... Does that mean there’s a lack of talent?”

“What?”

“You said it just now. Amelia has the potential to jump over a wall but I don’t.”

“Yeah. I think so.”

Danny dropped his head when Jun Hyuk responded without a second of hesitation.

'Oy. This kid grew up in a lenient environment. He has a fragile mentality.'

Jun Hyuk started laughing.

"Hey, Danny. Are you misunderstanding me?"

"What?"

Danny still had his head down.

"Do you think I'm saying that Amelia is a genius and that you're just average?"

"Isn't that what you meant?"

"It's very different."

Jun Hyuk was trying to come up with a way to explain the difference between Amelia and Danny when he thought of two musicians.

"Hm... Do you like jazz?"

"Of course."

"Who's better? Miles Davis or John Coltrane?"

"Hey! How do you pick? They're both amazing."

"Right? Aren't they both geniuses?"

"Of course."

A great alien who unluckily crash-landed on this planet from space, the king of jazz, Miles Davis.

When major record label Columbia gave a scouting offer in 1955, he was already under a contract with Prestige Records.

To cancel the contract, he would need to release as many albums as the agency had

demanded. The saxophonist who joined then was John Coltrane.

In order to figure out the problem of the dual contracts with Columbia and Prestige, Miles Davis needed to record with Prestige more. In 1956, he ended up recording 4 albums for the so-called ‘in’ series ‘Steamin’, ‘Relaxin’, ‘Workin’, and ‘Cookin’. This record became one of the best in Hard Bop (spirit of jazz that is melodic and funky).

“Miles Davis made two albums a day, four albums in two days. That kind of music comes out even if he is improvising and playing without much thought. But what about John Coltrane? He’s someone who really made an effort, practicing until he went to sleep. Going up one step at a time.”

Danny finally lifted his head when Jun Hyuk compared him to John Coltrane.

“They both called geniuses now. This is the difference between you and Amelia. And... you think anyone can become John Coltrane with just the effort? It’s impossible. Whatever you say, John Coltrane is a genius with a tremendous talent.”

Danny’s face brightened when Jun Hyuk admitted that he is a genius. He could not help it because he had dedicated himself to an area where talent is most important. With a large palate (roof of the mouth), it is possible to make a good sound with stringed instruments. It is a world where even the shape of one’s mouth is a determining factor in the ability to enter the first class.

“You’re just different kinds of geniuses. Didn’t you win in the Montreal junior competition that all violinists under 16 went out for? At age 11? You think that’s possible through effort alone?”

Jun Hyuk tapped Danny’s shoulder and smiled.

“I told you to have confidence. If you don’t stop trying, you can become the greatest violinist. And someone like you lasts for a long time, people like Amelia are uncertain. You don’t know when they might collapse.”

Danny spoke carefully again,

“Then what about you?”

“Me? I was born with an unimaginable genius plus effort. You didn’t know?”



Bruno Kazel came out of Jun Hyuk's room and ran back to the party. He found the professors still drinking beers and went next to them.

"Professor, let's perform again one more time tomorrow."

"Excuse me? Tomorrow?"

"Yes. I would like to perform just the piano concerto on stage one more time."

To the professors, reopening a performance that the maestro had not been satisfied with was a grateful thing for the students. The students would welcome being able to see such a great's command for two days in a row. However, the maestro's continued words made everyone silent.

"Only, I would like to leave the command to composer Jun."

"Jun as the conductor?"

Not just the professors but the students began to murmur. It was not strange or new for a composer to command his own song. It was not even important that Jun Hyuk is a freshman or even that he is young. It is not uncommon for a classical musician to command as a teenager.

It was just shocking that Bruno Kazel himself was making this request. They did not know what he had discovered in Jun Hyuk's song, but the maestro wants to hear the performance from the composer himself.

"That... that would be an honor for us. Is it that you would like to teach Jun Hyuk command?"

"No. I would just like to watch Jun Hyuk as a conductor. Will that be alright?"

This meant that Bruno Kazel had accepted Jun Hyuk as a fellow conductor.

"Of course."

With the end of this conversation, the students who had been drinking bottles of beer, scattered. The CH orchestra members were thinking that they would finally know the

identity of the rumored kid. The other students disappeared to text those who had not been present at the party.

Early the next morning, Jun Hyuk and Amelia were called to Professor Randall who told them about Bruno Kazel's proposition from the night before. They could guess why Bruno Kazel had made this suggestion. Only four people knew of last night's events.

"What do you think? I'm sure it's a yes?"

Professor Poster saw Jun Hyuk hesitate and continued his cautionary words.

"Maestro Kazel asked this of us because he said that he would like to see you command... It would be ill-mannered to reject."

"I'm okay with it but....."

Jun Hyuk looked sideways at Amelia and watched her expression. Amelia turned to Jun Hyuk instead of the professor to speak,

"Then Jun, give me time to practice separately. I've played this song with the orchestra plenty of times, so is there a need for me to go into rehearsal again?"

"Of course. Do what you want. Then I'll see you at the concert."

They stood up before listening to Professor Randall's response.

'Don't those two have a friendly relationship?'

Professor Poster who did not know anything of last night's events had a bad feeling about tonight's performance.

Chapter 115

Jun Hyuk was explaining tonight's performance to the members of the CH orchestra.

"Since you've already had plenty of practice, just keep one thing in mind. Today's performance is completely controlling the pianist. Think of it as a rodeo. If you can't get it under control by the 22nd minute of the 3rd part, you're falling off the horse. Our crushing defeat. Obviously a crushing defeat for the pianist, and a failure for the performance."

The orchestra members could not believe that Jun Hyuk was comparing their performance to a rodeo before they had even started practicing. Was it any different than saying that they are improvising the performance?

"If you can, look at me instead of the sheet music. It'll be a fun performance where unexpected situations might occur."

"Look here. This isn't jazz. What do you mean unexpected situations?"

One of the orchestra members bolted up and shouted out. The limit for improv performances is normally 7 people. The performers need to sign to each other to start and end their ad libs and pass on the baton. Having members beyond this number makes it harder to send signals to each other, and it is virtually impossible in large numbers like an orchestra.

"Ah, you don't need to worry about that. I can handle those unexpected situations plenty."

After appeasing the concertmaster, he looked at the orchestra members again.

"There could be small changes from time to time during the performance. Don't be surprised and just follow my directing. We'll be following the score like a classical."

Lastly, Jun Hyuk said what he was expecting for the end results.

"And... there's a big chance the performance will be a failure. Even if it isn't successful, that's totally my fault and I would like to tell you once again that it has nothing to do

with you all. Then shall we start? You can't take your eyes off of me."

Jun Hyuk looked each member in the eye and held the baton high.

There was not an empty seat in the theater to see the freshman that the maestro had pinpointed himself as the conductor.

The professors were of course there, but even the dean was sitting there with interest. They were not wearing dresses or suits, but casual clothing like jeans.

When the lights turned off in the audience, Jun Hyuk and Amelia walked out onto the stage together.

Jun Hyuk saw Amelia nervous and whispered,

"Play however you feel. However you want to. It's okay."

With the orchestra's melody, the performance started.

When the 1st part ended, the 2nd part started within moments. The observing professors' expressions subtly changed.

It was fast.

It was incomparably fast to Bruno Kazel's performance.

The orchestra members and Amelia could not hide their embarrassment. However, Jun Hyuk's baton led them without hesitation.

As the ringing of the piano strings grew louder with small differences in the nuances, jun Hyuk looked at the cellist and thrust the baton. The cellist relayed the strength he felt in Jun Hyuk's baton with his hand holding the bow. A thick and strong cello sound came out and the piano became calm again. The strings and winds were taking turns catching the piano that kept trying to fling out and by the time they reached the 3rd part, the piano was very stable.

The 4th part started with a deafening piano where the orchestra and piano released all of their power.

The professors whispered to each other as they spoke.

"This... It's completely different than yesterday."

"Isn't the piano a little unstable? She's showing an entirely different touch than she did yesterday."

"Yes. But the 4th part today... I'm sorry to the maestro to say this but there's a much more abundant sound."

"It's a little unstable, but it's hard to see a performance with such dynamics. It seems Jun exerts that appreciation on a live stage."

If this had been a concert where tickets were necessary instead of a student recital, it was a performance that would have ended with formal applause. The feelings of the unstable pianist and orchestra were properly delivered as they had watched. But this is a school. It is a place where they could be satisfied with even a moment of music that made their hearts beat.

When the performance ended, there was cheering and clapping like that of the day before. The difference from last night was that this enthusiastic response was directed at the pianist.

It is because the vehemence of the 4th part had shaken up the students as they forgot the instability of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd parts.

There was no after party as there was the day before. The people involved in the performance including the orchestra members were talking about the performance in the hall outside of the theater.

All of the orchestra members had flushed faces because they rarely had such tight performances. It was as Jun Hyuk had said. It was not perfect, but it had been a fun performance where they were in a gallop without knowing when they might fall off the horse.

"Isn't this a very different performance from what is indicated on the score?"

"My thoughts are different. That much can be explained by the contrast in the conductors. The difference just feels greater because Maestro Kazel performed it last night."

While the professors were exchanging evaluations, Bruno Kazel butt in,

“Isn’t there something that’s undeniable?”

Kazel was smiling brightly.

“It is a performance that undoubtedly revealed Jun’s genius. Isn’t it so?”

All of the professors could only look at Kazel’s mouth. The talent he had shown on a live stage was outstanding, but it was an exaggeration to say that he showed his genius. The stability of yesterday’s performance. He had not been able to maintain the peaceful melody of the piano or orchestra through the 3rd part. What had Kazel seen in Jun Hyuk as a fellow conductor?

“Did you see the conductor’s fingertips? Didn’t it look like he was commanding the performance with a clear understanding of how the 30 minute song would unfold? When any of the members seemed to be on the verge of panic, he already had the baton directed toward them.”

Listening to the maestro’s evaluation, they remembered something they had forgotten. The show completed with an unstable performance until the end. It was visible that the orchestra and pianist were surprised, but the conductor’s back had not shaken once.

“I see. Only the conductor was stable.”

‘In my opinion, Jun is already a complete musician.’

Bruno Kazel could not get himself to say this aloud.

When Jun Hyuk and Amelia appeared, Bruno Kazel exaggerated on compliments again.

“Oh oh, future maestro. Jun who has reserved a lifetime conductor position on the New York Philharmonic. You were really great today. It was amazing.”

He was not drinking alcohol, but his voice was loud enough for everyone to hear. All of the students there learned of the maestro’s thoughts. Today’s performance was a time to see how great Jun Hyuk is.

“No, it was a failure anyway.”

“What? A failure?”

Bruno Kazel was still reeling from the awe he felt from the 4th part so he thought that Jun Hyuk was being overly modest, but the failure Jun Hyuk spoke of was Amelia.

Jun Hyuk shrugged and indicated Amelia.

“That’s right. A failure. A powerful feeling came out once or twice, but that was it.”

The failure was not regarding the quality of the performance. It was his thought on the goal of the piano concerto. He meant that he had not been able to raise the pianist up a level.

“Amelia, take it slowly. Pianists are always at war with themselves.”

Bruno Kazel wanted to talk more about Jun Hyuk’s conducting than Amelia’s piano.

“Jun, will you get a coffee with me? Just the two of us. Professors, I would like your permission to monopolize on today’s maestro.”

Kazel did not wait for the professors’ response and took Jun Hyuk by the hand to the cafeteria to avoid other people.

He drank a whole cup of coffee without speaking to calm his excitement, and started saying what he had on his mind,

“Jun, do you know what a real genius is?”

An unforeseen question. Jun Hyuk just blinked, but it was a rhetorical question that did not need his answer.

“Not forgetting something you learned once? Learning at an incredibly fast pace? Applying what you learned differently from how others use it? No.”

Bruno Kazel spoke faster. He was excited.

“There’s no need to learn. It just happens. You just know, you don’t forget, and you apply it naturally... It just works. It’s like a newborn calf being able to stand on four feet without its mother teaching it to do so.”

Jun Hyuk could not tell if Bruno Kazel's words were to praise him or if he had other intentions.

"What on earth are you doing here? Is this school crazy to be hanging on to you to teach someone like you?"

He was not praising him, but honestly revealing his frustrations.

"Why are you wasting your time here?"

"I don't think it's a waste."

Kazel was the same even after hearing Jun Hyuk's response. He was sure that Jun Hyuk, like the professors, did not know his full worth. From what he had seen over the past two days, he was sure that Jun Hyuk did not need anything else if he just learned how to stand in front of an audience.

"No, it's a waste! What can you learn from the professors at this school? Be honest. I'm pretty sure there's nothing."

"That's right. There's nothing I've learned. But..."

"But what?"

"I'm not learning, but in a state of getting to know."

"What are you talking about? What do you mean you're getting to know?"

"Hm... Maestro, it's impossible for me to explain with my limited English."

Jun Hyuk thought for a moment and opened his mouth,

"You said that I know naturally, automatically? Yes, that's right. As you said, I don't need to learn. I can watch someone driving a racecar and know everything about racing."

It is easier for Jun Hyuk to make analogies than to express something exactly.

"I'm a racer who can determine a car's performance just by listening to the sound of its engine, figure out the state of the tires just from what I feel at my fingertips, and

understand the car by the vibration I feel with my body. It's just....."

"Just what? What are you saying is the issue?"

"I can only drive on a race track. I can navigate the track faster than anyone else can. But I can't drive on a normal road because I don't know the way."

It was then that Kazel could guess what Jun Hyuk meant.

"I'm getting to know that road at this school. A shortcut from New Jersey to Brooklyn, the highway I need to take to get from New York to Philadelphia... Those are the kinds of things this school is showing me."

Even for a pro racer, the best way to navigate an unfamiliar road is to ask someone. Jun Hyuk is asking about unfamiliar roads and learning the geography at this school.

"I can't say that I'm learning the way. I'm just getting to know the way. And there are a lot of things that I've come to know over a month."

Bruno Kazel burst out in laughter.

"Ha ha. Not even a top F1 racer can navigate the city? Because he doesn't know the road? That's a great comparison. Your English is good."

Kazel nodded as he looked at Jun Hyuk who thought of Clayton-Hoffman as a navigation system.

"It's a relief that you're not wasting your time here."

The mistake that talented youth commonly make in showing themselves in an unripened condition. They show this unripe state and forget it. How many of these kinds of youths had he seen?

However, this clever young kid is not in a rush. He has a clear understanding of his shortcomings and is going forward one step at a time.

"I was the only one in a rush. This is... a bit embarrassing. Ha ha."

He laughed again and spoke to Jun Hyuk with an affectionate voice,

“Jun, if you come to know the way to Philadelphia, make sure you come find me. Then I’ll let you know how to go out to the world.”

Chapter 116

When Jun Hyuk came back to his dorm, he found Amelia waiting for him in front of his door. The difference from last time was that she did not have a harmonica or a bright expression. But the reason why she was there was the same.

“Jun, can we try playing it one more time?”

“Again?”

“I want to feel what I felt during the performance again. Let’s do it one more time.”

Even if they play it again, it would be difficult to reproduce it. She would need to meet a song destined for her in a more dramatic space without a place for her to escape to, in order to bring up that emotion again.

Jun Hyuk could not reject Amelia’s earnest eyes.

“Alright. But it’s just one time.”

The two went looking for a practice room, but all of the rooms with two pianos were full. All of the students who had watched today’s performance had already taken the rooms. Amelia’s passionate 4th part had excited them.

“It’ll be hard to perform like this.”

They need two pianos if Jun Hyuk is going to perform the orchestra part. Amelia sighed in disappointment. Jun Hyuk sighed as well.

“Well there’s nothing we can do. Let’s go to my room. I’ll just play it on the guitar instead of the piano. It might be a little weak though.”

“The guitar is good too. All I need is to think of the orchestra accompaniment as I play. I’ll just ask you for the melody.”

Amelia was just thankful that Jun Hyuk was accepting her request. When they got back to the room, Jun Hyuk connected his electric guitar to the amp to handle the loud

sound of the grand piano and adjusted the volume.

“Alright, let’s try it. Don’t rush it even if it doesn’t work.”

Even if the electric guitar is called a 6 string orchestra, it is difficult for it to replicate an orchestra’s power and various sounds. Amelia played the piano without much change from the concert. The result would have been the same even if she played with a piano instead of the guitar.

Even though they repeated the performance three time instead of playing it once, there was no change. However, Amelia did not get angry or gloomy because she was surprised to find that there were times when the piano strings rang tenderly. If she does not forget the feeling at that moment, she could just realize the rest when she needed to.

Amelia closed the cover of the piano with a bright face.

“Jun, your guitar is no joke.”

Jun Hyuk had expressed the delicate and abundant orchestra part by fingering with his two hands.

“Of course. I love the guitar as much as I love the piano. The guitar is much sexier than the piano as well. Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk hugged his guitar to him and put his lips to it.

“Really? Then what song do you think is the sexiest?”

Amelia looked at Jun Hyuk with wide eyes.

“Of course John Coltrane’s Lush Life. It’s the best. How about you?”

“Me? Mine is Ravel’s Bolero. This isn’t just sexy. It’s music that makes you feel what sex is.”

Jun Hyuk was surprised when Amelia said the word sex without hesitation. He understood and felt the open culture of the west, but it was the first time he had heard a female say the word sex in a conversation.

Amelia turned on the laptop sitting on Jun Hyuk's desk and looked for Ravel's Bolero on YouTube.

It is a Latin dance song from Spain with a slow tempo. The strong accent of the Spanish song brought a slow and dreamy feeling.

The unique point was that the same theme was repeated on different instruments. It is a great song that shows that the melody, rhythm, and harmony of music are not the only important factors but also the timbre.

A repetition of the same melody and rhythm in order of the flute, clarinet, bassoon, oboe, and trumpet. This great music that shows a different emotion with each instrument makes it feel like the listener had been watching one person dance while it ends up with everyone dancing.

"Oh, there's a performance by Maestro Jean Martinon."

While Ravel's Bolero flowed from the laptop, Amelia slowly danced to the song. While moving her body in a way most appropriate for the song, she began taking her clothes off one by one, starting with her jeans.

"But did you know that Ravel's Bolero is only 15 minutes?"

Jun Hyuk spoke as he admired Amelia's beautiful body.

"We can listen to it three or four times on repeat. Why? Is it too little?"

"Three or four times won't cut it. I really like Bolero too."



Danny came back to the dorm with a few bottles of beer. He was sure that his roommate who liked to be alone would be sitting at his desk, transferring his thoughts on today's thoughts on sheet music.

Danny wanted to drink with Jun Hyuk quietly and hear his thoughts on today's performance.

When he opened the door, Jun Hyuk was not sitting at his desk but on his bed with his

bottom half wrapped in his sheets. There were items of clothing all over the floor and his bed was already a mess.

When he was about to say something in surprise at Jun Hyuk's unexpected state, Jun Hyuk quickly pointed a finger to the bathroom. They could hear the sound of a shower.

Danny quietly put the bottles down and mouthed 'Amelia?' When Jun Hyuk laughed and nodded, Danny covered his own mouth and put his thumb up. He quietly backed out of the room and made sure to lock the door.

Amelia finished her shower and came out of the bathroom with a towel around her to find the bottles of beer.

"You thirsty? I brought these."

When Jun Hyuk spoke slyly, Amelia laughed as she picked up a bottle. She had heard the door open and close while she had been in the shower. She had guessed that Danny had come and gone. She also knew that Danny would not return tonight.

Jun Hyuk searched on his laptop and a low and slow saxophone sound came flowing out.

"Now, don't we need to hear my song? John Coltrane's Rush Life."

"How many minutes was that song?"

"14."

"It's too short."

"It's okay. We can put it on a loop."

Jun Hyuk took the towel off of Amelia and threw it.



"Again? Hey, look at a score or play the piano or the guitar. Is Amelia a score? Is she an instrument?"

"I'm Amelia's piano. Ha ha."

Amelia was always in the room before Danny and she had no thoughts of leaving. He was fine with it for the first one or days, but Danny was starting to get angry after a week.

However, he could not turn down Jun Hyuk's wish for him to excuse them until the winter break at least.

After the night of the performance, Danny needed to sleep in Amelia's room. Her roommate did not care that Danny was sleeping in Amelia's bed. She was always walking around the room in her underwear and did not hesitate to shower with the door open. In her eyes, Danny did not exist.

Danny was actually more uncomfortable. He did not know where to look in the mornings, and pretended to sleep until she left the room.

He hoped that Jun Hyuk would not fall too hard for Amelia. The life of musicians. Especially two people like Jun Hyuk and Amelia with promising futures date on the premise of breaking up.

It is a life of traveling the world to perform. No matter how in love they are, they would be lucky to meet a few times every year. Out of sight, out of mind. On top of that, there was no guarantee that the affection of Amelia, the passionate Latino, would last forever.

"Jun, Latin women are so scary they shoot their cheating boyfriends to death. Be careful."

Danny could only warn Jun Hyuk to maintain an appropriate line.

He thought that the gossip that Jun Hyuk had taken the school's greatest beauty would be everywhere, but it had not become a hot topic because of the news that Bruno Kazel had assessed Jun Hyuk as the future conductor of the New York Philharmonic.



Once one semester passed, It was much easier to listen and speak. It was English he had already learned 2 years ago from Yoon Kwang Hun. It was just that the English in his head had started coming out of his mouth and coming in through his ears.

The lectures in the strange accent were still hard, but he was getting used to the other classes and even finding them interesting.

He was not memorizing a textbook. There is no curriculum either. The teachers and Jun Hyuk take a topic and exchange their thoughts. It is not the way calculus equations are solved. He learned the definition of calculus, the kinds of challenges it solved, and its usage. The lessons were conducted by connecting Newton and Einstein with the laws of gravitation, an endless loop of calculus, gravity and gravitational concept.

Classical and European history as its background were especially interesting. It was great information about musicians' careers and how they changed society.

The classes were not hard or boring in any way. Jun Hyuk could ask whatever he wanted and the professor delved deeper into the topic by asking more questions instead of giving an answer.

The students started to pack their bags in the last week of December. They are getting ready to go back to their hometowns for Christmas and a two-month break.

Students from wealthy families received separate lessons and people like Amelia who are stars in their countries were busy touring.

Jun Hyuk had been extremely interested in studying during the first semester and wanted to remain at school to make up for where he fell short.

Jun Hyuk sent Amelia away at the airport after turning down the offer to tour Argentina with her, and returned to an empty dormitory.

“Don’t cheat on me or else. I have 7 brothers.”

Amelia did not forget to give a warning before getting on the plane.

Danny also went back to Canada after saying that he would completely master the violin song that Jun Hyuk gave him.

Chapter 117

Coline who said he would become a rockstar, stayed at the dorms like Jun Hyuk. He was preparing for his band's first single.

"Jun, you're not going to Korea?"

"No. My grades aren't good. I need to study."

"Your grades aren't good? What? Ah....."

Coline saw the book Jun Hyuk was reading and realized it was his special class.

"That's hard for anyone to get good grades in. What is that? Is there anyone in this school who reads that book?"

He flipped the book Jun Hyuk was reading to read its cover and stuck out his tongue.

"It's okay. It's pretty fun. It's just a little frustrating because there are a lot of words I don't know."

"Hey, that book is hard for me to understand too. Why on earth are you reading Nietzsche?"

Coline thought Jun Hyuk's special classes were too harsh, but also fascinating that Jun Hyuk did not lose interest.

"Apparently Nietzsche wrote this when he worshipped Wagner. It's interesting. But... Hey! If you're going to talk nonsense, go. I need to study German too."

Jun Hyuk swatted at Coline's hand as he went through the books.

"Anyway, it's good that you didn't go to Korea. We're not going away either."

"We? Ah, the band?"

"Yeah. We're going to record during the break. Won't you participate?"

“I told you I won’t. You do the band alone and succeed. I have a lot of money.”

“You convert my rock spirit to money.”

Coline who had been speaking in an exaggerated tone spoke cautiously,

“My German is perfect... You want me to teach you?”

“What? Really? You’re American. Where did you say you’re from?”

“Chicago. But I’m Slovakian.”

“Do they speak German in Slovakia?”

“No. Slovakia has its own language. My mother is German.”

It is a quite appetizing offer. He knows from experience that language is learned faster by practicing speaking than by reading.

“Fine. Then it’s just one day. I’ll take a look at your band’s music.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, but you can’t bother me any more.”

“Oh oh... my maestro! How can I thank you.”

“Say it in German.”

Coline put his band’s music on a CD and gave it to Jun Hyuk. It was just music they had not played properly in the practice room, but Jun Hyuk kept admiring Coline’s bass.

He had not been fooling around when he said that he wants to become a rockstar. He was good enough to contemplate between becoming a cellist and bassists. Coline is an extremely talented player performing with nearly perfect rhythm, funk, and melody.

“Who are these members? A band that performs at clubs?”

“No. Students at New York College. The guitar is a journalism major and the drummer is management.”

“Impressive.....”

“What do you think? They’re good, right?”

Coline gained confidence at Jun Hyuk’s reaction.

“Coline, are you really going to do the band? What do you think about going all in on the cello instead? It’s a pity because you’re already comparable to Jacqueline Mary du Pre.”

Jacqueline du Pre is a genius cellist from England who debuted at age 15 and became internationally renowned in her early 20s, formally retiring at age 28 due to a chronic disease. She is also the wife of Daniel Barenboim, the conductor of the London Philharmonic, Paris Orchestra, and Chicago Orchestra.

Jun Hyuk said that Coline is a top genius cellist, but Coline did not waver a bit.

“Thanks but I’ve already given up on classical.”

Jun Hyuk let out a long sigh at Coline’s calm answer.

“Whew – Then reserve a recording studio. Let’s make this song well. I’ll produce it, so tell your members that.”

“What? Produce it?”

“Why? You don’t believe in me? If not, forget it.”

“No. I’m just surprised because I was only expecting a little advice and you’re saying you’ll even produce it.”

“It’s because I don’t want your bass to go to waste. This kind of bass can’t be buried. Also, the song isn’t bad.”

“Thanks. I’ll tell you as soon as we reserve a studio.”

When Coline stood with a light heart, Jun Hyuk asked,

“But what’s the band’s name?”

“Violon.”

As Jun Hyuk watched Coline say the name and run out, he smiled.

“That kid still wants to play the cello.’

Violon.

The official name of the cello is the violoncello, and this means that it is a double bass. Viol means a big violin or or big viola as seen in the violin or viola, and eventually means double bass. Since the diminutive cello is attached here, it becomes ‘small double bass’.

Coline still loves the cello.



“It’s too grand. And too complicated.”

This is what Jun Hyuk said during the first take while recording the guitar. The guitarist of the band Violon was confused as to whether or not it is a compliment, but realized that it is not a compliment from Jun Hyuk’s frown.

“You need to play harmoniously because you’re not supposed to be showing off your technique. The song has a simple riff... but the guitar is to Yngwie Malmsteen.”

Yngwie Malmsteen is a classic kid who loved Bach but after watching Jimi Hendrix perform on TV, became a prospective guitarist in Sweden.

Like a classic kid, he added a baroque melody to heavy metal and is the person who changed the average speed of guitar playing with sweep fingering and technique.

Jun Hyuk was not praising him on his technique, but telling him not to play something that is unnecessary.

Violon’s guitarist was about to refute but closed his mouth. He remembered what Coline had warned him about.

“Listen up. This kid calculates each note while making a song. He’s recognized as a

genius by a great musician. Make sure you do as he says without complaining because he's someone who will make our song great."

Jun Hyuk whispered to Coline after listening to the 2nd take for the guitar,

"We'll spend the night like this. Can't we take the easy route?"

"Easy? How?"

"Can I rearrange it? I tried to go with the original song the way it is... but honestly, it's hard to bear with."

"You?"

"Yeah. I'll only touch the guitar and drums. The bass can go the way it is in the original since there's nothing to change there."

"Hang on."

Coline spoke with the band members for a moment and went back to Jun Hyuk,

"Okay. Those guys also decided to trust you and go with it. But you can't change the song completely. That's our pride."

"I told you, the song is good. I'm really just going to arrange it."

Jun Hyuk took the guitar and spoke to the guitarist,

"Look here, guitar guy. With your skill, you'll get it just by listening once. Okay?"

Jun Hyuk went into the recording studio and played the guitar and drum more concisely than in the original.

The guitarist and drummer looked full of complaints because all of the parts that would have shown their grand performance skills had disappeared. However, they left their performance to Jun Hyuk when they saw the recording engineer move to the music.

They still seemed to have complaints after finishing the recording and listening to the full song. It does not have the rough taste that is characteristic of rookie rock bands

and its grandiosity. All that was left was a simple refinement. This felt like music from the 3rd or 4th album of an experienced group rather than that of a rookie band.

"Alright, that's it for me. I brought out the best I could so if you don't like it, just record it again according to the original."

Coline and the Violon members listened to the recording repeatedly for two days and came to one conclusion. The song is a little outside the band's color, but it is not one that they get sick of easily after listening to it continuously.

Coline put the song on the online store and boldly chose the price. It was valued at \$1.99.

From that day on, all Coline did was from the moment he woke up was to check the views.

Chapter 118

“Coline Spartos?”

“Yes. Who is this?”

“I’m Alex Zakin from LA Sound... Do you know who I am?”

Coline threw his fist in the air and silently yelled YES! multiple times. Finally!

“Of course, Mr. Zakin.”

LA Sound. It is a label that emerged in the 80s, when a pop metal called LA metal swept the world. When other labels disappeared in the 90s with the introduction of alternative rock, LA Sound caught on to the trend and brought out bands from the American West to make them stars. That LA Sound grew into a leading label covering the entire U.S.

Gaining the attention of Alexander Zakin with the Midas touch as LA Sound meant that they had unlocked the first gate to stardom.

“I heard your band’s music. It’s very appealing.”

To hear the word ‘appealing’ from the maker of stars. Coline wanted to fly to LA immediately if he could.

“Thank you, Mr. Zakin.”

“Do you have songs other than the one on the online store?”

“Of course.”

“Good. Then I’d like to hear the rest of the songs... I’m sure you’ll be able to send over a demo?”

“Of course I can. I’ll get it ready right away.”

He could not make a single mistake with this golden opportunity. Coline ran straight to Jun Hyuk, but Jun Hyuk kept the door bolted and told him to go away.

“Hey! Didn’t I say one song? I can’t do anymore.”

“Jun, it’s Alex Zakin. The Zakin of LA Sound!”

“Whether it’s LA or Washington, I don’t know. If you don’t stop, you won’t see me ever again!”

Not even Jun Hyuk’s yelling could curtail Coline’s excitement. He told his band members immediately and they gathered in the practice room to make song selections. They chose the 5 best songs and ran to the recording studio.

Coline and the band members painstakingly recorded the songs for 2 days and did not sleep trying to finish the second half, but did not even know that they were tired.

After completing the music, they made the files in the highest sound quality and sent them as an e-mail to Alex Zakin.

Coline quit checking his views in the Apple store and was instead, checking his e-mail every hour. However, Alex Zakin did not even open the e-mail he had sent even as a few days passed.

When he was so frustrated that he could not even sleep, he could not wait and called. Zakin himself called to ask for the music, but was not even paying attention now!

However, a secretary answered instead of Zakin. Not even the 1st secretary, but what seemed to be a training junior secretary at that.

It must be because he is an extremely busy person. He would deliver the message to check his e-mail. Coline just ended the call because he could not keep listening to the employee repeat these kinds of responses.

There must have been an effect of calling because he received a message that the e-mail had been read and all he had to do now was wait.

Your music is great. Let’s prepare for a tour right away. He waited for a response with this content, but there was still no news.

Finally after 2 weeks, Coline took the call he had been waiting for from Zakin.

“Coline?”

“Yes, Mr. Zakin.”

It was a more anxious moment than when he had been waiting for his acceptance notification from CH School of Music. What decision had he made?

“I apologize for the late response.....”

“No, it’s alright.”

“Honestly, there was no longer any reason to contact you but I couldn’t help it.”

What did he mean there was no reason to contact? What does this mean? His hand holding the phone began to tremble. He had an ominous feeling.

“I needed to know the reason why the music that came up on the store is so different from the music in the demo. It’s to the point where I thought it was a different band.”

“Excuse me?”

“There are a lot of cases where one song just stands out so I was thinking that’s what had happened, but it’s too different. Since you’re the person who made the music, can you explain it to me? Why is there such a deviation when the band is the same?”

“That... that’s...”

“If you as the person who made the song doesn’t know, there’s no longer a reason for us to stay on the phone.”

“.....”

Coline could not figure out what Zakin’s first question meant. Then there was a truth he remembered right away. The arrangement and tips Jun Hyuk had given them in just one day had made such a difference that they thought the music was from another band.

While Coline hesitated, thinking of how to explain it, Zakin’s voice became cold,

"Well, it seems there's something you're hiding."

"Excuse me?"

"It's fine. Send me an e-mail when you want to come clean. That'll be the last opportunity you can grab. Then."

Coline stared blankly at the phone. He could not believe this situation that had come and gone like a rain shower.



"Alex, aren't you scaring him too much?"

"It's fine. Even this is too little for kids these days."

"Don't you think our speculation might be wrong?"

"This kid Coline is going to send an e-mail. And he's going to come clean with who the arranger and producer are. You want to make a bet? I'll bet \$100 he e-mails me within an hour."

Alex Zakin spoke with confidence.

First, a staff member gave him a song saying that there is something he should listen to. One of countless \$1.99 singles in the Apple store. It was one amongst thousands of songs uploaded for free every day, but this had been uploaded boldly with a price.

When he first heard it, he thought that it was not by a rookie. All rookies have a rough taste. It is difficult to find a band out of thousands with music that can move someone through its roughness. It had not been touched, but it moved a person's heart. The band that LA Sound was sifting through thousands for. Though Coline's band lacked the rough taste, it showed a refined taste.

That refined taste had moved Zakin and made him want to contract them.

Alex Zakin saw so much potential that as soon as he heard Coline's single, he held a staff meeting.

“Tell me your thoughts. Starting with the cons.”

Criticism came pouring out as soon as Zakin spoke.

“The hook is weak.”

“There isn’t enough of a rough taste for a band performance.”

“Lyrics are mushy too.”

“I’m positive these kids grew up spoiled. Maybe college students in New York?”

Since he had heard enough cons, it was time to hear the pros. He would weigh them and decide on the heavier side.

“Then the pros?”

“The melody is good. They can have a wide spectrum for their target audience.”

“The bassist is excellent. And it’s refined.”

Alex Zakin snapped his fingers and stood up from his seat.

“That’s it right there. Refined. This band’s greatest forte. They did pretty well for recording in a cheap studio, no? I don’t know who did the directing, but that’s the leader of this band.”

It meant that someone great had done the directing and had amazing producing. Alex Zakin thought someone in the band had played this role and was determined to contract whoever it was even if they had to throw the band away.

He asked for the rest of the songs to be sure, but none of the 5 demo songs showed the abilities of the producer. The demo songs just had a much better band similar to the countless bands with the rough taste. It was at a level where they could perform at local clubs and would need a lot of revision to make a nationwide debut. They had left the producing of these types of songs to someone.

It was certain that the songs themselves belonged to the same group, but the song on the online store was like music where a great chef showed skill with bland music whereas the demo songs felt as though the ingredients had just been thrown together.

Alex Zakin's expectations were not wrong. An e-mail came before 30 minutes had passed.

"Is this brat kidding?"

Alex Zakin wanted to curse as soon as he read the message. Coline's e-mail was full of excuses that they had not been able to record the demo properly because they had been in a rush.

"Hey, send a text message to this brat."

"Excuse me? A text?"

"Yeah. Not to lie to me. And Ili, you're taking over this kid now"

LA Sound's producer Ili Gotez had attended the meeting for no reason and felt like he had been hit. He was sure this kid Coline lives in New York, but to go to New York from LA?

He might have to leave warm LA. He had heard that New York winters are brutal.

Chapter 119

“Jun, please do it with us. I’m telling you Alex Zakin himself called!”

“I don’t know. I told you I can’t. And who is that?”

“You don’t know? The top record label in LA. Zakin is the top producer at that company.”

“Then it’s fine. Isn’t it over once you get the attention of someone like that?”

“That’s... To tell you the truth, he could tell at once what you produced and what you didn’t.”

When looking at one record as a movie, the singer is the actor, the lyricist and composer are the scenario writers. The producer is the director.

The first detail checked while deciding on investing in a movie is who the director is. In the same way, the important person in the recording industry is the producer.

Occasionally, an outstanding musician makes the music, performs and sings, while doing the producing. However, there are not very many outstanding musicians. Most records need to go through a famous producer to bring out proper music.

Jun Hyuk dramatized a scenario that actor Coline had brought and directed it in a refined way. Coline knew that if this Jun Hyuk dropped out, Alex Zakin would not take another look at him.

He had not mentioned Jun Hyuk in his e-mail because he had not heard Jun Hyuk’s definite answer yet.

“Coline.”

“Yeah.”

“You said that LA Sound is a tremendous record label, right?”

“Yeah. Not just in LA. It’s now one of the top 3 labels in the whole country.”

“Then there will be a lot of great producers at that company. Those people can do the directing for you since your music isn’t bad. I’m telling you it’s good as long as you do the arranging and producing well.”

Jun Hyuk thought that he was being cold but that he should not drag it any longer. A famous label would not have gotten in contact just by looking at the producing. If they had seen potential in Coline’s music, Coline needs to make that potential a reality.

If he is unable to do that, Coline will have to disband his group and face the choice of becoming a great bassist or cellist.

However, Jun Hyuk did not know that LA Sound’s reason for paying attention to Coline had been greater for something other than his music.



“Ili, go listen to it in person.”

“Excuse me? Is there a need to go in person.....”

A long time ago if they heard rumors of a great band, they needed to fly hours to go meet them in person. After the smartphone and online store appeared however, the tasks of record label’s managers were made easier.

All they had to do was look through the online store for good music. It is now an age where music shows itself by riding the cables.

“You’ve gotten lazy. Don’t you think we need to check for a last time?”

“Ah, are you talking about the bassist?”

“Yeah. If that song on the store is the only thing they have, just get the bassist. It’s not easy to find a player like that.”

If Alex Zakin recognized someone’s talent, he is worth listening to in person. Ili Gotez had to fly to New York in the cold winter.

The New York winter was colder than he had expected, but something more surprising was waiting for Ili Gotez.

'What is this? Was it a high school student?'

He checked the lists of New York clubs for bands, but there was not a band called Violon. Not performing at New York clubs meant there is a high possibility that they are minors. It is obvious that they are playing by themselves in a home basement or garage.

If they really are minors, he would not be able to see how they perform without them noticing.

If they are high school students, they would have caught a big fish. It is hard to imagine how great they would be in 10 years if they are at this level as teenagers. It would not be bad to maintain a relationship with them and wait to see how they grow.

Ili had no choice but to call Coline.



A young boy running into Starbucks and looking around. For a moment, Ili thought he was being fooled. He is not a high school student.

It is the moment he decided that he would just listen to one song and go back to warm LA.

Ili raised his hand and signaled to Coline.

"Coline?"

"Yes. I am Coline Spartos."

"It's nice to meet you. I'm Ili Gotez."

Ili needed to say what he was curious about while looking at Coline who was so nervous he could not speak.

"What's your profession? You're not one of those spoiled types who... live off their

parents and dream of becoming stars, are you?"

"Ah, of course not. I'm a student at the Clayton-Hoffman School of Music."

"What? Clayton?"

Ili was surprised when he heard this unexpected answer and put his coffee mug down. It is enough to make someone curious. Is it not a place where musical geniuses went?

"Well, I didn't think you would be a student at the famous CH School of Music. Phew – I was surprised. Then does everyone perform classical?"

"No. It's only me... The other members are students at New York College."

"Students at New York College? This is... too dandy?"

No wonder the music had a strong mushy feeling to it.

"Then Paganini? Chopin? Karajan? What genre are you?"

"No. I'm a cello major."

"Cello? I see. I knew the bass melody line was good. You're the bassist?"

"Yes."

"Who made the songs?"

"I did."

He was positive this cellist is the band leader. Rock and roll by model students. What little expectation Ili Gotez had, disappeared. He only wanted to get out of this cold place and quickly get back to LA.

"Let's end this quickly. I'd like to hear your band perform live first. Is that possible?"

"Of course, Mr. Gotez."

Coline called the other 2 members to hurry up and get to the practice studio and went with Ili Gotez on the streets of Queens to the studio.

“Alright, you know the song on the online store? Let’s hear that first. Both versions.”

“Excuse me? What do you mean 2 versions?”

“I’m talking about the version before it went through arranging and producing. That’ll be your real music.”

With Coline’s signal, they performed the two songs for an audience of one. There is only one person, but that person is more important than the countless general audience. They put all of their strength into giving a perfect performance without room for a single mistake.

When they were done playing the 2 versions of the song, Ili Gotez’s straight face changed. It is not a performance worthy of admiration, but he could clearly see that there is potential.

“But you guys... have never performed live?”

“No. How did you know that?”

Ili looked at a surprised Coline and laughed arrogantly.

‘How would I know. I know since I looked through all of New York club lists.’

There is no reason to tell him the truth. He needs to give the airs of an expert.

“I can just tell by listening. And... I’m pretty sure you won’t be able to play the songs other than the one on the store in a performance.”

“Excuse me?”

“Your band’s music is for listening. It’s not for live performances. It’s too grand and complicated for the audience below a stage to cheer for. It’s impossible for them to try to leave their bodies to the music.”

It is too grand.

Coline remembered where he had heard Ili’s words before. Jun Hyuk had said the same thing.

He needed to forget about Jun Hyuk from Ili's continued words.

"Just do one thing."

"Excuse me?"

"The cello or bass – do one. The same goes for you guys. It's impossible to succeed in this industry while getting As at New York College."

Coline had gone around saying that he is working towards becoming a professional, but he started to be scared when he heard that he needs to learn to be a professional from an expert in the industry. There was fear in the faces of the other two members as well.

"Quit your studies at New York College and start performing at New York clubs for \$50, \$60. There's no way to know what your music is like even if you practice by yourselves without an audience for 100 days."

Ili's words were not of criticism, but caution. He is telling them how to become a professional band.

"You'll come to know what your music is like once you perform in front of an audience drunk off of beer with their cold response, ragging, cursing, or worst case, ragging on you while throwing their bottles at you. And then you'll learn how to bring out the cheering from those people."

Ili Gotez continued with his warnings while looking at the guitarist who also took on the vocals.

"Once you start touring, you're on a bus for at least 10 hours. A private plane? That doesn't exist. You sleep inside the bus. You eat at highway rest stops. And rehearsals, performances... You'll have to spend a year with a tight schedule like this. Will your voice be able to handle that? How about your stamina? Music comes after that. What good is it if your music hits 1st on Billboard charts when you can't even handle a tour?"

During the 9 years that Bon Jovi did not have a name, he performed at clubs from 7 at night to 5 in the morning every single day. The reason why he still has not lost his vocal power is that he created a strong voice in this period. The Beatles also performed for 7 hours in Germany when they were unknown. Paul McCartney could not endure much more and suggested splitting up the singing, bringing out the members' skills.

"Your band's music is good. The song isn't bad and your playing is on par. Prove that music in a real situation. Start here in New York. Make all of the clubs in New York want your band. That'll be your first gateway."

Their music and playing skills are good. Ili Gotez's last evaluation made Coline more inspired.

Ili saw all three of their faces brighten and went on to say his 2nd reason for flying to New York,

"Now tell me honestly. You made the first song perfectly. What happened with the rest?"

"....."

"You're saying it's still a secret? Ha ha."

"No. It's not a secret but a promise."

Coline quickly spoke so that Ili would not misunderstand them.

"Promise?"

"Yes. It's because he promised to help us just one day, with just one song....."

"One day?"

Ili Gotez was gripped by the words that it was one day. He had brought out the essence of a grand and complicated song to make it receivable to the public. In the short period of one day.

"By chance, did that person all do the arranging? Guitar and drums?"

The bass had been the same as the original. Leaving something that does not need to be fixed alone is the arranger's ability.

"Yes."

"In one day?"

"I guess so, since he heard the music in the morning and we recorded in the afternoon."

Ili Gotez found his reason for flying to New York in this cold winter.

"Then would I be able to meet this person as well?"

"He'll be at the library now."

Coline scratched his head with an uncomfortable expression.

"Library? Is he at the same school? CH? Or New York College?"

Ili looked back and forth at the students of the 2 schools.

"He's a student at our conservatory."

"Then that means he's a classical boy... What's he doing at the library? Do music students study scores in the library?"

"No. He'll be studying history, physics, or math right now."

"What? What are you talking about? I thought he's a music student?"

"He is but he has some circumstances."

Ili looked at Coline's uncomfortable expression and spoke quietly,

"Won't you tell me what those circumstances are? Your band's future could be riding on this."

Coline gulped at Ili's straight face. The future is riding on this.

Chapter 120

"Alex. We need to hurry up and do some research. The name is Jun Hyuk Jang. He's Korean."

"Korean?"

"Yes. This person did the producing for Coline's music. He's not a normal kid. Since he already released an album in Korea, there'll be plenty of information on him."

"What do you mean he isn't normal?"

"That's why I'm telling you to look into it. This kid could be the big shot instead of Coline."

Once Alex Zakin got off the phone with Ili who suddenly got excited, he passed the memo to his secretary.

After about an hour, a producer instead of the secretary came running with a CD.

"Alex, who is this?"

"Whew – that's what I told you to do. Why are you asking me?"

He was about to sigh in annoyance, but his secretary also came running in.

"Jun Hyuk Jang. He's an 18 year old Korean. He went out on an audition program in Korea a year ago, and is an orphan. He wandered the streets for about 10 years and then met a kind Mr. Tom....."

Alex Zakin watched his secretary blabbing and exploded in annoyance,

"Look here. Stop going on about some fairy tale story and get to the point! I don't care how some Korean kid lived. Why is everyone being like this?"

"Oh, okay. He's known as a genius musician in Korea. They say he's a one-man band. He plays the guitar, drums, and piano like a professional. His composing and arranging

is perfect."

A young 18 year old genius. A perfect musician who can do everything himself. The people of this industry are good at blowing things out of proportion. Alex Zakin did not believe 1/10 of what his secretary was saying.

The last is always music. The producer whose life is music, cut the secretary off and spoke,

"Alex, this kid even has an album... Just listen to 3 songs first. I've chosen the essence of his music."

The producer put the tablet PC he was holding on Alex Zakin's desk.

When a piano song called 'Close' came out, Alex Zakin's eyes widened. He could not judge the piano skills through the cheap tablet PC speakers, but the melody captured his attention. If he had not known, he would have thought that he was listening to a song by Ennio Morricone, a master of film music. He could tell enough about Jun Hyuk's composition skills with this one song.

The second song, the rock version of 'Kanon', showed his drum and guitar skills. He could go on stage immediately. Alex Zakin realized that none of his secretary's explanation had been exaggerated.

The last heavy metal song showed his power in just the first half.

"Ili was right."

"Excuse me?"

"This kid is really a big shot."

Alex Zakin asked again to check,

"Did that kid really compose all of these songs?"

"Yes."

"You're sure this kid is in New York right now? What does he do?"

“He’s a student at Clayton-Hoffman School of Music.”

“What? He’s another one of those kids digging at Mozart’s grave? What a bother.”

“What are you going to do?”

The producer admiring Jun Hyuk’s music spoke carefully.

“Don’t we need the last verification?”

“Excuse me?”

Alex Zakin looked at the producer with disappointment because he had not understood what he meant.

“Ili’s still in New York?”

“Yes.”

“Tell Ili to bring the band and the Korean kid here.”

“Are you saying you want to release Coline’s record?”

“We’ll have to decide whether we’ll release a record or just record it when they get here. At the least, we’ll be able to check one thing. What weapon this Korean boy has.”

Alex Zakin’s heart beat for the first time in a long time. They had become a goose laying golden eggs because of these kinds of geniuses who appear occasionally. It is a happy event just to see how large of a golden egg this Korean prodigy would lay.



“Alex, it’s impossible. I’m telling you this kid won’t leave the library. He has no interest.”

“Ili. It’s not normal for a talented kid to be obedient. Have you seen kids like that who listen? Anyway, don’t come back if you can’t bring all of them. You know it’s expensive to live in New York, right?”

Ili ended the call with Alex Zakin’s reckless warning.

“What more is he trying to see? Damn it.”

Ili's conclusion had not been very different from Alex Zakin's. There is plenty of potential and he is a great bassist. And the kid from Korea has a talent for producing.

With these 3 points, all that needed to be done was to have Violon play at New York clubs. A record release is something for the future, and the Korean kid who did the producing has no thoughts of coming outside of CH School of Music. He is already someone of a different world, having fallen into classical.

Ili also knew that he could not change Alex Zakin's stubborn mind. He called Coline,

“Coline, make sure you bring that bookworm out of the library. Alex Zakin is telling me to bring you guys to him with that kid. I'm sure you know what this means?”

Ili's call made Coline go running to Jun Hyuk again.

“Jun, what do I have to do? I'm begging you. I'll become the world's biggest idiot if I let go of an opportunity like this.”

Jun Hyuk let out a long sigh at Coline's desperate eyes.

“Whew – You're saying I have to go all the way to LA?”

“Yes. Why do you think he's telling us to go to LA with you? It means he wants to record an official record.”

When Coline saw hope for Jun Hyuk's permission, his heart started beating faster.

“Hm... How many songs did you say there are?”

“5 songs.”

Coline's fingers trembled as he gulped.

“Fine.”

“Oh, Jun! Thanks a lot!”

“I just have one condition.”

“A condition?”

“Yeah. From now on, you and your band have to do whatever I say. Don’t argue with me. You have to play and sing the way I tell you to. I have no intention on directing your band while having to explain why. Okay?”

“Okay! Of course. Those kids are already your fans. Thank you so much.”

It had not felt this good even when he had completed a perfect performance. Coline felt that he could vaguely see the door to success before him.

“Lastly, tell that guy from LA to bring a contract. With the arranging, session, and producing fees in detail. I’m really expensive.”

“What? A contract?”

Coline blinked at Jun Hyuk’s unexpected words.

“Then? You expected me to do this for free? Didn’t you say it yourself? That you’re heading towards becoming a professional? When is anything free in the world of professionals? And this might be your album, but I’m working with LA Sound. Not with Coline and his band.”

He had been forgetting something. Jun Hyuk is a professional musician who released an album in his country. He is not an amateur like Coline, waiting for an opportunity while practicing in a studio.

“Ah, right. Sorry. I didn’t think of that because I was so happy. You’re right. I’ll meet Ili again first. Jun, thanks again.”

When Coline ran out, Jun Hyuk looked annoyed.

‘Did I act like a professional for no reason? How much do I have to ask for?’

Jun Hyuk locked his door and made a phone call.

Chapter 121

“Hello. Sir?”

Hey, Jun Hyuk. What's up? You're calling twice in one week?

“Well... Something bothersome happened.”

What? What happened? Was there an accident? Did you beat someone up?

“Hey. Am I some hoodlum? To hit someone?”

Then?

“I didn't get in an accident. I unexpectedly came across a way to make some money.”

What? I sent this kid to study... I left you there because you said you wanted to study but what? Money?

“That's why I said unexpected.”

Jun Hyuk quickly explained the situation in order to avoid Yoon Kwang Hun's nagging. He even added in that Coline the cellist is his best friend.

Most middle-aged Korean men nod their heads if they say it was for a friend.

Really? Then there's nothing you can do.

It worked. Is it because friends disappear one by one from middle aged Koreans? They go flying when it comes to friends.

I think Lawyer Baek would be better for that than I am. He said he has something to tell you anyway. Hang up and wait. I'll tell him to call you right away.

Jun Hyuk hung up the phone and waited for a moment before it rang again.

Is this Jun Hyuk?

“Yes, Lawyer Baek.”

This kid is still calling me Lawyer Baek. I told you to call me uncle. Really!

Lawyer Baek Seung Ho is very different from Yoon Kwang Hun. Yoon Kwang Hun is not affectionate, but Baek Seung Ho does not hesitate to express his friendliness.

“Ah, right.”

You haven’t heard the news, right?

“What news?”

Your album. It’s doing pretty well in Japan. You didn’t know, right?

“Japan?”

Yeah. It’s sold over 120 million right now. It’ll sell better than it did in Korea. And it’s standing proudly at 3rd place on the chart. You’ll become rich soon. Ha ha.

“3rd place on the chart?”

Ah, not Oricon or Orion or whatever it is, but a Japanese Indie Music Chart.

Jun Hyuk had not known that his album was being sold in Japan.

You’re not long from becoming a Hallyu star. You don’t have a picture but if you did, it would be all over Myeondong.

“Well, I.....”

Baek Seung Ho did not give Jun Hyuk a chance to speak and kept talking,

I know you’re not coming back to Korea because of your studies, but can you make about a week of time?

“A week?”

Yeah. Let’s meet in Japan. It seems Japanese partners have gotten in contact multiple times, but Mr. Jo Hyung Joong and Mr. Yoon Jung Su turned them all down saying that

you're studying.

Baek Seung Ho's proposal became tempting when he recalled the familiar faces one by one.

They say it's a huge deal for these kinds of sales without ever having a promotion by the star of the record. Apparently it'll be different again if we pour oil on this while it's going out well. And... you can see Kwang Hun. Isn't a week okay?

He wanted to go to Japan to see Yoon Kwang Hun, not to promote his album. He even thought that Baek Seung Ho had prepared this event to give him and Yoon Kwang Hun time to spend together.

And the most important thing. All expenses will be paid for on the Japanese side. What do you think?

"It's like getting a tour of Japan for free. Of course I have to go. Ha ha."

Okay. Then wait while I check on the schedule. I'll let you know when we can go. Then I'll see you in Japan.

"Wait. I said I had something to ask you. He didn't tell you?"

Ah, right. He said something about a friend. What is it?

When Jun Hyuk explained his situation, Baek Seung Ho started by bursting out in laughter.

Ha ha ha. When you take a part-time job, it's at a different level. Can't you do something more common? Like delivering pizza?

"It's not funny. I have to meet them soon."

Alright. In those situations, you only say one thing. You'll look over it and get back to them.

"Excuse me?"

They'll make a proposal, whether it's orally or in a contract. Then tell them that you'll take a look at it and get back to them as quickly as you can. As soon as possible. Okay?

“But what if they ask me how much first?”

Listen carefully. The first person to give a number in a negotiation is the one who loses. You know what you do well. If you don't like it, tell them to forget it.

“What if they really stop it?”

Then you don't do it. It becomes an excuse you can give your friend too. How can you help him when the negotiations didn't work out?

Oh! There was a convenient way to do it. Jun Hyuk even thought that all the smart people in the world must be lawyers.

And Americans forget everything once a contract is signed no matter how much you fight during negotiations. They just think of it as a part of work. Just push it forward.

“Okay. Thank you, Lawyer Baek.”

Hey! I told you to call me uncle...

Jun Hyuk hung up the phone. It was too soppy to call him uncle.



The Jun Hyuk that Ili met in the 1st floor lobby of the school lightly exceeded his expectations. A bookworm in the library with a sparkling talent in the recording studio. Jun Hyuk's image is far from these kinds of people.

Normally when musicians meet a person from a large record label, they are bound to be a little taken aback. But Jun Hyuk did not shrink back. His confident expression, the hand he put forward for a handshake.

“I guess we'll need to pay according to our company's manual? This is the general contract. I already printed it. Take a look.”

Ili seemed to be a bit angry as he got to the point and handed the contract over. Jun Hyuk thought that it was because a rookie was bringing money up first, but Ili thought it definite that they start with a contract. He was just frustrated and annoyed that everything was moving so slowly.

"\$5,000 per song in the case of a newbie producer. It's \$55,000 since there are 5 songs."

"Alright. I'll look over it and let you know as soon as possible."

"What? Look over it? Forget it if you're thinking of trying to make a deal. This is already decided. And there aren't very many companies that are as generous as we are."

"We can just leave it if you don't want to. I'm just here because of Coline. Use a different producer if you can't wait. I'm sure you have a lot of producers since it's a large company."

Ili grabbed his hair with one hand and waved with his other, motioning for him to go. It is not his job to go through such negotiations. If the price is not right, they can just not go through with it.

Jun Hyuk took the contract and went back to his dorm. Coline followed him, looking teary.

"Jun, how much do you want? I'll earn the difference and give it to you. Really."

"Money? No. Honestly, I was surprised too. It's \$55,000 for just 5 songs."

Coline could not come to him senses as he saw Jun Hyuk laugh.

"What? Then why didn't you okay it on the spot? Are you doing this because you want to see me go crazy?"

"Ugh, Coline. Trust me. This is how adults make deals. I'm a professional who even released an album in Korea. You tell the LA producer tomorrow that I'll sign the contract. Ha ha."

Coline finally relaxed when he heard Jun Hyuk's arrogant laugh. He had just grabbed the handle of the door to success.

Coline threw his now weak body on Jun Hyuk's bed when his phone rang.

"Oh, Mr. Gotez. I was about to call... Excuse me? Airline ticket? Okay. I understand. Please wait one moment."

Coline blocked the phone with his hand and whispered,

"Jun, Ili is calling."

"Why? He's so impatient. How many minutes have passed....."

"No, that's not it. He said he'll take care of all of our airline tickets. Something about hating New York because it's cold? He said he needs an answer right away because he's personally taking care of the expenses. If you reject this, he's going back alone."

Jun Hyuk smiled brightly and stuck his hand out to Coline.

"Deal."

Coline's face also became bright and he high fived Jun Hyuk's hand with strength.

"Mr. Gotez, Jun is signing the contract right now. Thank you for being considerate."

When the call ended, Coline jumped on Jun Hyuk's bed and cheered. Jun Hyuk spoke while looking at Coline,

"Stop playing around and get down. There's a lot to do now. It isn't a time to play around like a kid."

"Oh, sorry. I got too excited."

Jun Hyuk took a guitar case out from underneath his bed.

"Let's go."

"Go? Where?"

"What do you mean where? Your practice studio. Tell your members to hurry up and come too."

"Why the studio all of a sudden?"

Coline could not figure out what Jun Hyuk was trying to do. He remembered the promise he made. The promise that he would do as he was told so that Jun Hyuk would not have to explain everything.

"You're asking because you don't know? We have to hurry up and modify the songs to

practice them. You want to get to LA and practice what I arranged? You have to record once you get there.”

“Then you’re saying you’ll arrange it now? There are 5 songs. When are you going to do all of that?”

“This kid. You still don’t know me. Hey! An hour is enough for 5 songs. Let’s hurry up and go.”

Coline stuck out his tongue as he followed Jun Hyuk who was already leaving the room.

Jun Hyuk had his guitar on his back and was walking the cold New York streets with Coline.

“There wasn’t time to tell you last time, but I have to tell you something.”

Chapter 122

Jun Hyuk did not look at Coline and spoke quietly,

“Your band Violon is a bit old. Hey, don’t get mad. It’s not something bad. Your music has a strong feeling of heavy metals from the 70s and 80s. While the riff and melody are alternative rock.”

Coline also knew what Jun Hyuk was talking about. Old music. However, Coline loved the old music that showed each player’s grandiosity much more than he likes the simple and strong alternative rock of current times.

“The important thing is that you have to choose. You can do the music you want to and appeal to only the audience that will love your music. But if you’d like to match yourselves to a changed audience, you’ll need to get rid of that heavy metal feel.”

“We have our own color. Even if it’s old.”

“I’m sorry to say this, but it falls short to become a star with just your band’s color and the music you want to do.”

Jun Hyuk was known to give frank evaluations. It is also the most precise evaluation.

“The song is good. The only problem is what color you give that song. The important thing is that no matter what color you give it, the nature of it doesn’t change.”

Trees change the color of their leaves according to the season. A ginkgo tree that is green in the summer begins to yellow in the fall. However, there is no change to the fact that it is a ginkgo tree.

“Arranging doesn’t ever change the nature. So you have to make the choice. Are you going to maintain the present color and arranging it so it’s refined? Or do you want to make it refreshing by getting rid of all traces of the old heavy metal? Coline, I’ll do it the way you want.”

Coline yearning for success was greater than his desire to stick to his unique color.

“As you said... Jun, you take it in the direction you want since I’ve requested it of you. Our band Violon’s producer is you right now.”

After Jun Hyuk arranged each of Violon’s 5 songs, he even finished playing them himself. Unlike the last time he arranged for them, the band’s guitarist and drummer did not make any objections and started practice according to Jun Hyuk’s arrangement. They had received a call from a top agency because of Jun Hyuk. With a little more luck, they might be able to debut.

They were full of the thought that they could not throw away an opportunity from the heavens just because of their pride.

“Coline. I’m going to go first because I have something personal to take care of. I’m sure you’ll be able to perform this fine if you practice the arranged songs for two days?”

Coline and his band members exchanged looks for a moment before nodding.

“Then practice today and tomorrow, and let’s go to LA the day after. Tell the man from LA that he can go back first if he can’t stand the cold.”

“Okay.”

Jun Hyuk saw Coline focus on practice before leaving the studio and started walking quickly. Jun Hyuk arrived at the place where Coline and his band had recorded their first song.

“Hello, do you remember me?”

“Oh! Perfect boy. Of course I remember you. What brings you here? To record?”

“What? Perfect...?”

“Ha ha. That’s the nickname the people working at this recording studio gave you.”

Jun Hyuk smiled and said his reason for coming,

“May I use one of your recording booths? I’d like to use it today and tomorrow.”

“We’ll empty one no matter what. It’s a joy to listen to your music. So, is there anything

else you need?"

"We're only going to play the guitar and keyboard today. I brought the guitar, so just set a keyboard up. We'll need both source and mixing for the tracks. We're going to record the drums and bass tomorrow... please set up the bass guitar and drums with these."

The engineer's eyes widened when he saw the note Jun Hyuk handed over.

"What is this? How many tam-tams is this? Will his arms even reach?"

"Don't worry about it. Is it possible to get this ready?"

"It is possible... but the bass guitar and the drum set... It's too expensive. The renting fees will be high."

"It's fine since there's no issue with the fees."

"But what are you recording for 2 days?"

"What else could it be? Of course it's music. We're going to record 10 songs. Please pay attention. He he."

All of the recording studio staff members' jaws dropped. It is surprising when someone says that they will record 10 songs over two days, but it does happen. Poor musicians need to record as much as they can in the time that they rent the studio.

Their jaws dropped because of the guitar that came out of Jun Hyuk's guitar case.

"That... That... It's a custom. Who are you? Are you royalty in Asia?"

It is a shabby studio in a New York alley. In this place where amateur bands come to record, this is the first youth to come in with a guitar worth over \$10,000. He had appeared in person with a guitar that everyone had only looked at and drooled over.

"It's a gift from my father. And that's how I came to New York. Alright, there isn't much time. Let's start quickly."

Jun Hyuk put the headphones on in the recording booth and started playing. He had asked Coline for a simple intensity, but Jun Hyuk's performance now was the opposite.

He created a grand and explosive guitar phrase.



"Jun, it's just 4 or 5 days. Why do you have so much stuff?"

"Oh, I have to go to Japan from LA."

"Japan? Why?"

"I guess the album I released in Korea is doing well in Japan. I have to attend some promotion event and I'm going to see people I've missed."

Hearing words like album, promotion, and Japan made Coline realize the reality that Jun Hyuk is a professional musician.

"You... really are a star in Korea. You've already broken through Japan."

"Know that it's an honor. There'll be a day when your music goes flying off shelves just because I did the producing."

Jun Hyuk laughed and spoke as if joking, but Coline thought that it could be a prediction of the future.

Los Angeles, the other half of American culture from New York.

If New York has the New York Philharmonic, New York Ballet Company, and New York Metropolitan Museum as its representatives of traditional art, LA is the place where innovative and experimental artists gather.

LA is the place that exhibits works that become social controversies and create echos without hesitation.

When Jun Hyuk and Coline's party came out of the airport, there was no space for them on the platform for buses and taxis. There was a surging crowd from all over America, coming to LA to get out of the cold.

Jun Hyuk and Coline's party was also in an uncomfortable situation because they did not know how they were going to get into the city with all of their instruments. While

Coline and his band members were calculating how much it would cost to take two cabs, Jun Hyuk was on the phone.

When Jun Hyuk got off the phone, he gave a look to the band to follow him and took lead.

“Jun, where are you going? The taxi platform is on this side.”

Coline called for Jun Hyuk to stop while pushing a cart full of luggage, but Jun Hyuk’s response was entirely unexpected.

“Apparently the reserved limousine is here. They said there’s a lot of traffic on the road to the airport. Said it might take over 2 hours to get us into the city?”

“What? Limousine? What limousine?”

“Ah, I reserved it. To go to the hotel comfortably. We can’t suffer when we have big business to do.”

The driver of a long 6-seater limousine discovered Jun Hyuk waving his hand and bowed politely.

Chapter 123

Jun Hyuk's party organized their luggage at a small hotel in Westwood and went to LA Sound on Wilshire Boulevard, the center of LA's economy. As soon as they entered the building, countless platinum albums and posters of stars that LA Sound created caught their eye.

Coline and his members could not hide their excitement and touched their flushed cheeks and wiped their sweat.

"Oh, you're finally here. What do you think? Isn't it much better than cold New York?"

Ili Gotez who had been frowning the whole time he was in New York, greeted Jun Hyuk's party with friendliness as though that had never happened. Jun Hyuk could feel that as Lawyer Baek Seung Ho had said, they would work as colleagues since the contract had gone smoothly.

"First, I'll introduce you to the boss and then we can discuss your schedule. Boss is waiting too."

What caught their eye more than the magnificence of the office was the occasional star that passed by. Every time they saw the producers, composers, and stars who had been awarded several times at the Grammys, Jun Hyuk's party could not take their eyes off of them.

When Texas blues guitar great Jimmie Baughan passed by with the smell of cigarettes, even Jun Hyuk wanted to go after him and ask for a signature. However, they had come for business today. They could not become fans and had to act nonchalant.

When they got off the elevator and entered a conference room with glass walls, the famous Alex Zakin was waiting for them.

"It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Alex Zakin."

"Hello. I'm Jun Hyuk Jang. You can call me Jun."

When he held his hand, he could feel the strength. After shaking each person's hand,

Alex Zakin gave Ili Gotez a slight look.

"Alright, our band will have to control their condition, no? Let's record formally tomorrow and warm up today. You can take a look at our recording studio too. Let's go."

Jun Hyuk was about to follow as well when Alex Zakin quickly spoke,

"Jun, can we speak for a moment?"

Jun Hyuk separated from Coline and the band and went into Alex Zakin's office. Like a leading figure in entertainment, his office could not have been more brilliant and the walls packed with platinum albums caught Jun Hyuk's eye.

They are all albums that Alex Zakin had produced.

"Jun, I listened to your album. It's good."

"Thank you."

"Did you compose everything yourself?"

"Yes."

"But the album is a bit of a fusion... The entirety has a classical form but each song was a different genre, right?"

"Yes. I mixed it up a little."

Alex Zakin lit a cigarette and blew out smoke.

"Did you choose classical in the end? CH School of Music?"

"That's not all. I'm there for now because I think there's a lot to learn."

"It didn't look like you have a lot to learn. It looked like you could come out as a professional musician immediately without problems from the way you work with various genres."

"No, I still need to learn a lot more."

“You’re modest. Is that a characteristic of Asians?”

“No, I’m not that modest.”

“Ha ha. Is that so?”

Zakin who had been sitting back in his chair put out his cigarette and sat up straight.

“I did a bit of research and... in Korea, they say you’re a genius. Have you formally learned producing?”

“I learned a little about the equipment used in a recording studio, but I’ve never learned or done any producing.”

“I heard that you arranged Coline’s song in just a day. What, is it something where notes fill your head and come out if you listen to music? An alien like Mozart who produces thousands of scores automatically?”

“It’s similar.”

When Jun Hyuk said that he is a genius like Mozart without a change in expression, Alex Zakin burst out in laughter.

“Ha ha ha. You’re right. You’re not modest at all.”

Jun Hyuk frowned slightly at Alex Zakin’s laughter. He had not come all the way to LA to talk about such useless things.

“Mr. Zakin.”

“Ah, you can just call me Alex. It’s okay.”

“Fine. Alex, there’s no need to check to see if I’m a genius or whatever. That’s not important. My schedule is a little tight, so I’d like to talk business.”

“Business? Isn’t it your business to start producing Violon band’s music tomorrow?”

“What does he mean business? Alex tilted his head at Jun Hyuk as he said something unexpected. Jun Hyuk took a smartphone with earphones out of his pocket and handed it to Alex.

“First, listen to this.”

Alex Zakin put the earphones Jun Hyuk gave him with interest. Before even a minute passed, his eyes grew wide and he shouted,

“What the f.....”

While Alex Zakin listened to Jun Hyuk’s music for 40 minutes, it was unsure whether the sounds that kept coming from his mouth were of admiration or swearing. While he was engrossed in the music, Jun Hyuk slowly went around the office looking at the platinum albums and star photos on the walls, and the awards.

“This... What on earth is this?”

This is the first thing Alex Zakin said after over 40 minutes.

“What do you mean? It’s music. Did you like it? Ah, I guess it’s something I didn’t need to ask.”

Alex Zakin sitting deeply in his chair while smoking clearly showed his shock.

“Jun. Is this why you came to LA?”

Jun Hyuk nodded as though it were definite.

“Of course. Is there a reason for me to come all the way to LA to record Coline’s songs? There are tons of recording studios in New York.”

Jun Hyuk had an arrogant expression. It felt like he had done what adults call negotiations, alone. A successful negotiation at that. He was proud.

“I learned how to think while attending school for the first time. If you like Coline’s music, all you have to do is sign him on, so I was wondering why you would call me all the way here. My conclusion is that recording Coline’s band is just collateral and I thought that you wanted to see me as an arranger.”

“It’s true. A good musician appeared, so of course I want to see for myself.”

Though they are bantering, the music left in Alex Zakin’s ear did not disappear. He had just thought that he is a youth with a talent of bringing out sophisticated music. That

youth was living in an old-fashioned castle like CH School of Music.

The classical world is barely hanging on with the support of millionaires who think of classical as a lofty hobby. On the other hand, the world of popular music is where one can buy a house on the beach in Santa Monica and ride a sports car with just one song hitting 1st place on charts. He wanted to bring that talent out here.

However, he had the thought that he had miscalculated that talent. The music he just heard proved that mistake.

“What is this music?”

“Honestly, I wasn’t really interested in LA Sound and Coline’s band. I only worked on a song because I thought it’d be okay to help out a member of the quintet I’m in. But I didn’t know because I don’t normally check labels when I listen to CDs... but I did a search and saw that LA Sound released a lot of albums that I like. So I made some tribute music to those musicians.”

“Are these 10 songs those tributes?”

“Yes. Show them to the 10 musicians and if they are pleased with it, to have them sing it.”

Sing? They are perfect instrumentals created with the guitar, drums, bass, and piano. There is no space for singing. However, Alex Zakin is one of the top 3 producers in America. He thought of what he had missed after Jun Hyuk’s explanation.

“This piano part is the vocal. Right?”

“Yes. I put it in as the guide for the vocals. It’s fine for the musicians to change it a bit when they actually sing it.”

Jun Hyuk stopped walking around the office and sat in the chair opposite Alex Zakin.

“Then shall we talk business now?”

Chapter 124

Alex Zakin looked at an elated Jun Hyuk and laughed lightly,

“What business?”

“Of course a record business.”

“Why do I have to release your record? Did you think that if a newbie like you came to me with music, I would release an record for you?”

Jun Hyuk showed surprise at Alex Zakin’s sharp words.

“Isn’t it a definite thing that you release a record if you like the music? I’m positive it looked like you were engrossed in the music.”

“Real business is releasing music that sells, not good music. And... someone like me can do as I feel. No matter how good your music is, there is enough good music that I can just throw your music in the garbage.”

Alex Zakin saw Jun Hyuk’s perplexed face and laughed.

“Ha ha ha. But this would be a waste to throw away. And one more thing. Good music sells of course.”

Jun Hyuk relaxed at Alex Zakin’s laughter. He had been teased. Like a newbie.

“Look here, Jun. Can I say one thing? It could be a word of caution.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t put your feet in business.”

“Excuse me? What does that mean?”

“You just do music. And find a real business partner who can sell your music for the highest price. There’s no reason to act like an adult when you don’t have to.”

There is a high chance that a person who tries to do business with an immature youth is a swindler posing as an adult. On that thought, Alex Zakin is a real adult.

"I don't know business either. I'm just a producer. An ear that selects good music. An eye that finds good musicians. And the ability to bring out the best sound from artists. That's all I have. Business? The capable people at this company do that. All you and I have to do is talk about music. Let's leave the business to the experts."

Jun Hyuk only looked at Alex Zakin for a moment without speaking. He felt again that there are a lot of good adults in this world. No, it could be that becoming a good person meant becoming an adult.

"Then shall we start talking about music?"

"Yes."

Alex Zakin's mood lifted when he saw that Jun Hyuk's face became brighter.

"Well, I think you understood me clearly. Anyway... there aren't any lyrics?"

"Ah, no lyrics yet. I don't speak English well enough to write lyrics. They can write the lyrics themselves."

"Who are the stars of these 10 songs?"

"I'm sure you'll have an idea of who they are since you listened to the songs."

Alex Zakin recalled the people he had thought of every time he listened to a song.

"Can we change it?"

"Excuse me? Do you mean you'll change the musician I had in mind?"

"It's a little embarrassing to say."

Alex scratched his head and explained the circumstances.

Jun Hyuk's tribute targets are bands that debuted with LA Sound and led rock and roll in the 80s. The 80s was the zenith of the recording industry with a worldwide boom as its base.

One hit song earned them enough money to buy a private plane. It was normal to live carelessly in a Beverly Hills mansion with dozens of dream cars on display in the garage, calling pin-up girls every day. Rock of that period was a symbol of decadence and extravagance.

The leader of this period, guitarist Randy Rhoads was in the band Quiet Riot. This band's vocalist, Kevin DuBrown put their daily life into words,

"Pop stars enjoy tennis on the weekends and drink beers as they hang out with beauties in bikinis. We hire whores and spend the entire weekend naked with sex and drugs. This is the difference between pop and rock."

Most rock stars who spent their daily lives with alcohol, women, and drugs are now in a state beyond recovery.

"I see. That is a pity."

"Would you like to produce these 10 songs yourself?"

"Ah, the greatest reason for this work was to get to meet the stars I like....."

"What? It was selfish. Ha ha."

Alex was able to see the teenager in Jun Hyuk.

"It's a pity, but the stars you like are the people 30 years ago, not the people now."

"I guess that'll be the case. That's too bad."

Jun Hyuk shrugged and brushed it off. He did not want to see the stars he liked in ruin either. He would just remember their fresh images on the album covers.

"Since your plan is ruined, what do you think about leaving the cooking to me? I'll find the artists who are most fitting for these songs instead. Is that okay?"

"Let's do that cooking after I find a great business partner."

"You learn fast. Good. I'll just start preparations. Hurry up and find your partner. I've come across music that excites me for the first time in a while."



“Did those kids go?”

“Yes. I told them not to go out to try and meet girls and rest to be in good condition tomorrow. I let them know we’re going to start recording tomorrow at 1 in the afternoon.”

When Jun Hyuk’s party left, Ili Gotez joined the staff meeting that Alex suddenly called.

“Good. First, listen to this. There are 10 songs, so let’s start the meeting after you listen to all of it.”

Alex Zakin placed a CD player on the center of the table in the conference room. He put in the CD Jun Hyuk had given him, pressed play, and sat back in his chair to enjoy the music.

The producers and composers gathered in the conference room did not react very differently from Alex. Music that is completely different from the trends these days. To look at it one way, they seemed to be reproducing the glory of the past, melting the magnificent performance of each part with each song’s diverse themes.

It was to the point where they thought that it was not even from the 80s, but from mid to late 70s, the age of the rock renaissance. The young staff were surprised by the ever-changing configurations of the songs, and the older people looked as though they were lost in nostalgia.

After more than 40 minutes passed and the music ended, Alex Zakin laughed and spoke,

“What do you think? Reflections?”

“Did that Korean boy bring this?”

Alex Zakin nodded to surprised Ili’s question.

“Ili. That Korean boy you brought is a big shot who easily jumps over our expectations.”

“Did that kid come so he could show you this?”

"Pretty much. It seems he likes our company's records."

Alex spoke with a satisfied look.

"Well, what are your thoughts?"

Once Alex Zakin spoke, the conference room became noisy. There was the question of whether it would appeal to the masses though the musicality is outstanding. There was also the contradictory stance that with such outstanding musicality, the masses would not be able to help but like it.

"Let's say we put all 10 of these songs in one album. Don't you want it?"

The noisy conference room became quiet at Ili Gotez's input.

"Right? I even want to buy this original with the piano."

The result of the meeting came out with Alex's words. He has the Midas touch that creates mega hits. He wants to create an album with all 10 songs, not just choose one out of the 10 to work with.

There would not be a song that tops the Billboard singles chart, but it meant that it has the potential to reach the top of the albums chart.

"Did you sign a contract for this?"

"No. I decided to wait until Jun finds a proper representative. In that time, we need to find the owners of this music."

Ili had the best expression in the conference room. There was a reward for having endured the cold in New York. A golden calf had walked in on its own.

"Ili, you take over Coline's recording tomorrow."

"What? Me?"

"Yeah. Isn't the arranging already all done?"

"Oh, yea it was. I heard everything in the studio earlier and there was nothing to touch with the songs. I think we can just get out the sound perfectly. But what about the

Korean boy?"

"Don't you think we need to give him a small gift when he brought music like this to us?"

"A gift?"

"There's something. Ha ha."

The staff in the conference room just stared blankly at their laughing boss.



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